The Haft Paykar, By Nizami Ganjavi.
A Medieval Persian Romance.
Translated by, Julie Scott Meisami.
1995.
1.
Invocation.
In the name of God, the Merciful, the Compassionate.
O You from Whom the world began,
before Whom nought had ever been;
The Source from Whom all things have come,
the End to Whom all will return:
O You Who raised the lofty sphere,
kindled the stars in order fair,
Created Bounty's endless store,
and fashioned Being through Your power:
All men's affairs You order well
Who are All, and created all.
You are, and have no like nor peer;
to all wise men You thus appear,
Enlightening men of insight, though
without form, through the forms You show.
All beings live by vital force;
but Your sole Being is their source.
O You who formed the world from nought;
Who cherished it, and plenty brought:
Your Name is first among all names;
You first Beginning, final End;
You were, before all reckonings,
and still will be, when all else ends.
Each creature's being You have formed;
to You alone will each return.
Thought cannot reach Your high estate,
nor death's dust sully Your high gate.
You were not born, all others were;
You are the Lord, all others air.
You show the way with one swift thought;
one word untangles every knot;
And he who would not bow to man
is prisoned fast with lock and band.
Tonight You give the radiant dawn,
today the birds, to birds their grain.
You have bestowed on sun and moon
two tents with white and black adorned.
Both day and night traverse Your way,
true servants of Your royal sway;
By Your command both good and ill
they do, but nought by their own will.
You kindled in man's mind the light
of reason, than a lamp more bright;
And yet with all its quickness, it
cannot perceive You, as is fit.
If reason on Your path goes lame,
how should man's fancy there incline?
The soul, that substance in ourselves,
none knows the place wherein it dwells;
You, Who're no substance, know no place,
how should bewildered fancy trace?
You're guided not, but are the Guide;
present in all, nowhere reside.
We, of the seven spheres a part,
stand far outside Your noble court.
The Universal Intellect,
though by You guided, from respect
Regards You not. O You whose aid
in bright day and black night we need;
Who are the Changer of all states,
He Who alone such changes makes:
No good or bad, but by Your wish,
no being, of itself, exists.
You give to stone the ruby's flame;
bring forth from it the fiery gem.
Both earth and earth-revolving sky
cry out before your door, 'Make way!'
All, on Your fine-wove tapestry,
are figures; You their forms array.
How should the stars cause good or ill,
which are by good and ill enthralled?
Great Kayqubad, were such the case,
would stem from the stargazers' race;
But what stargazer, through his vain
predictions, ever treasure gained?
To him alone You treasure give
who knows not seven stars from five.
The subtle secrets of the stars
I've studied; pondered occult lore,
And puzzled what each page might mean:
when I found You, I washed them clean:
I saw that all things turn to God,
and knew You as their mighty Lord.
O You Who give to all their lives;
Whose ovens their daily bread provides:
Before Your gate exalt me then,
that I may have no need for men.
Without another's aid, bestow
my bread, Who nourish all below.
Since from my youth I never turned
away from You, my bread to earn
At others' doors, Your grace has sent,
without my asking, all to mine.
Now, an old man, I stand before
Your court; protect me from all fear.
What words are these? an error plain:
with Your support, the world is mine.
O Lord, the world bewilders me.
Yours is the power to set me free.

To whom should I complain? to You
Who welcome all; receive me, too.
Though many secrets lie concealed,
before You all things are revealed.
My poem's goal, not hid from You
Who know it well, You can make true;
But should You will it that I fail,
I'll bend my purpose to Your will.
'Tis best to seek from You alone
my purpose, and with You commune.
To tell the mystery to mankind
degrades me; if to You, I'll find
You'll raise me high. You, Nizami's
sole refuge, turn him not away
To others' doors, but honour him;
bestow contentment's diadem,
That, when all deeds to You are shown,
though poor, he'll boast a kingly crown.
2.
In Praise of the Chief among Prophets.
Benedictions and peace be upon him!
The primal Circle's centre, and
the Seal upon Creation's line;
The ancient sphere's first fruits; the crown
of lofty discourse; reason's gem:
Who, but the lord of confirmed faith,
God's Prophet, Messenger most praised.
By sword and crown the prophets' lord:
the Ascent his crown, the Law his sword.
Unlettered, source of all that's made,
the Carpet's light, the High Throne's shade,
Who sounds the Law's five turns; arrays
his fourfold rule over earthly clay.
He foremost goal, we all in need:
Muhammad he, his mission praised.
Of that first clay that Adam pressed,
he essence pure, all others dregs;
And when Heaven turns its final round,
his word shall seal its final sound.
On right are based his yeas and nays,
enjoining good, and banning base.
His boast, of poverty; no pain
to him, who such a treasure gained!
He put day's brightness in the shade:
what talk of shade, with sun displayed!
Of worldly rule the godly stay,
he worldly rulers mates and slays,
Abasing all who would rebel,
grasping the hand of those who fell.
With righteous men he dealt aright,
but anger showed towards evil might.
His vengeful sword struck evil down;
for good his kindness mixed sweet balm,
Elixir to sore hearts; his blade
to hearts of stone his wrath displayed.
Those foes who barred the road of faith,
and girded up their loins with hate,
Now beat their thongs upon his drum,
and, after years, all follow him.
Though God chose him from every age;
created this world for his sake;
'Turned not aside' his eyes hath sealed,
a garden beyond this revealed.
From seven hundred thousand years,
seven thousand servitude declare.
The servants of the blue-robed sphere
his service's ring wear in their ear.
His four true friends, both root and branch,
are walls for the Law's treasure, staunch.
From the divine Creator came
his eyes' bright light, blessings on him!
His soul life's every breath maintains;
his body both earth and Heaven spans.
This soul that body's life does bring;
all others throne, he Solomon.
His breath like musk the air perfumes,
and shakes moist dates from dry date-palms.
His miracle: dates from dry thorns,
that for his foes to sharp barbs turn!
His nail did split the moon in twain,
a two-halved apple in his hand.
Despite its fear, he rent away
the cataract that blinds the sky.
He was most blessed by the Creator,
the chosen one of that Elector;
And may on both our praises fall,
longer than the blue sphere shall roll.
3.
On the Prophet's Ascent to Heaven.
Since this world compassed not his crown,
his Ladder bore him to God's Throne.
To raise him high from low degree
came Gabriel with Buraq, his steed.
'Place now on air your foot of clay,
that your earth be made heavenly.
The Holy Presence you will guard
tonight; be purity's staunch ward.
Yours now is Buraq's lightning speed;
mount, to perform your watchman's deed.
Since I've conveyed your guardian's lot,
Buraq, your mount, I've also brought.
Traverse the sphere, for your its moon;
speed over the stars, for your their king;
From their seven roots, uproot the six
directions; the nine spheres unfix
From their four nails; pass by the Fish,

and bend the heavens to your wish.
The stars blend night's dark musk for you;
the green-robed angels wait for you.
The Egyptian beauties of this sphere
adore you, like a Joseph fair.
Rise, that your face they all may see,
and wound themselves in ecstasy.
Beneath you, form new vaulted whorls
for Heaven, from your shadow's curls.
Lamp-like, give the stars blooms of light;
fresh-faced as garden flowers, shine bright.
This night is yours; this hour, of prayer;
you'll gain whatever you desire.
Make new the angels' carpet; raise
your tent at the Divine Throne's base;
Brighten the Throne's eyes with your light;
fold up the carpet in your flight;
Then grasp the crown, for you are king;
exalted, rule created things.
Raise high your head in grandeur; make
both worlds your own, through your attack.
Then cleanse your path of dust; speed on
to the court of the Eternal One,
So that, your meed for coming nigh,
your flag may over both worlds fly.
When he, in secret converse, heard
from Gabriel these soul-moving words,
His intellect perfect thereby,
the Prophet hastened to obey.
One God's trustee in revelation,
the other in wise deliberation:
Both guardians of a wealthy trust:
no demon this, no sinner that.
One brought the message as decreed;
the other did its secrets heed.
In dark night, that light-giving lamp
was sealed by his high wish's stamp.
He shook not off that lasso's bond;
no yoke of gold but this is known.
Like lightning on Buraq he leapt;
his steed beneath, he grasped his whip.
He mounted; that celestial steed
traversed the sky with eagle's speed.
Like peacocks' wings his striking hoofs;
the moon like Kavus' throne above;
And in its flight, so quick it climbed,
the four eagles shed their wings behind.
It quickly passed over all it found;
the night was spurned, the moon reined in.
Have you seen how swift a fancy speeds?
how lightning quick unsheathes its blade?
Both world-traversing Reason's speed
and the soul's leap towards generous deed:
All, by its flight, were left as lame;
all by its lengthy stride constrained.
Its speed outstripped the Poles' swift course:
one moment south, the other north.
The Fish in that swift rushing stream
showed now as Lancer, now unarmed.
When he with Buraq's dancing feet
inscribed that volume, sheet by sheet,
He left behind the worldly road,
and far above the heavens soared;
Cut through the stations of the sky,
with angel's wings, a broad highway.
From his own verdant nature, he
gave to the moon new verdancy.
His silver-work to Mercury gave
the bluish shade of leaden glaze.
over Venus, from the moon's bright light,
he drew a veil of silvery white.
His dust, as he attacked the heavens,
set on the sun a golden crown.
Green-robed like Caliph of the West,
red garments bright to Mars he left;
And, finding Jupiter consumed
by pain, rubbed sandalwood thereon.
When Saturn's crown his feet had kissed,
he placed its flag in ambergris.
As he rushed on like morning's wind,
astride a mount like raging lion,
His comrade left off his attack,
and in his course Buraq grew slack.
For he had reached a stage so far
that Gabriel dared not come near.
From Michael's couch he rose, until
he reached the tower of Israfil.
He left that throne behind, and soared
beyond both Rafraf and the Lote.
Companions left behind, he pressed
on to the Sea of Selflessness;
Passed over that ocean, drop by drop;
traversed all Being, step by step.
When he came to the Throne's support,
he made a ladder from prayer's rope.
He went beyond the radiant Throne,
to the mystery of 'Praise be Mine'.
When, lost in his bewilderment,
God's Mercy came and seized his reins,
His distance of 'two how lengths' went
from 'he came near' to 'nearer yet'.
Rending the veil of thousand lights,
that unveiled Brilliance reached his sight.
Beyond his being's bounds he trod,
till he achieved the sight of God.
He saw outright the Worshipped One,

and cleansed his eyes of all but Him;
Nor did in one place rest his sight,
as greetings came from left and right.
All one, front, back, left, right, high, low;
the six directions were no more.
When Non-direction's flame burns high,
world and direction swiftly flee.
God, without form, knows no direction;
and so he turned towards Non-direction.
When sight is veiled by direction,
the heart's not free from false perception;
But when direction's hid from sight,
He who has none is seen aright.
Nought but the Prophet's breath remained;
for God alone then dwelled in him.
How can direction compass Him,
the All and All-encompassing?
When the Prophet saw God thus,
he heard words spoken without voice.
He drank a special draught; attained
great honour; from his closeness gained
The way to Truth; Fortune his cup,
Wisdom his saqi: nought else left.
With myriad prayers in tribute rendered,
from that high summit he descended;
Spent all he brought upon his friends;
placed it in trust for sinful men.
How long, Nizami, love this world?
How long be base? Raise high your head!
The eternal realm strive to attain,
which through Muhammad's faith you'll gain.
If reason guard your faith aright,
you'll cleave to Truth through the Law's light.

4.

On the Cause of the Work's Composition.

When, from the court of Solomon,
a hidden sign to me was borne,
Fleet as a bird on wings wide spread,
straight to the royal gate I sped.
'Twas told me: 'Make a new moon rise,
begin your pen's festivities:
So slim a moon, that not an eye
shall it through darkness' veil descry.
Make sorcerers, with your fancy's play,
to your enchanted words fall prey;
Some pepper grains on fire pour,
and let its hot flames crack and roar:
And in that heat make cold wax flow
and weep, till soft of heart it grow.
Bring forth from out this narrow road
your couch; how long a lame mule goad?
Bid your pen sprinkle musky dew;
let the dawn breeze grow musky too;
And bid the wind over amber dance:
the grass, like silk, with musk enhance.
Toil, for your time of toil begins,
and count each page the wealth of kings.
Your toil the way to riches winds,
for he who toils a treasure finds.
Until the vine weeps bitter tears,
its smiling harvest never appears.
For marrow one must crack the bone,
and flies round honey swarm and drone.
Will your cloud never its sweet rain shed?
Your oven's hot: now bake the bread.
Raise the curtain; show your skill;
the virgins' faces now unveil.'
When to this end the envoy spoke,
my grief subsided; joy awoke.
I searched through books both fine and rare
for what would free sore hearts from care.
All chronicles of kings of yore
were gathered in one book of lore;
Already one of keenest mind
had ordered it in verse refined.
From that, some ruby dust remained,
shards from which others something feigned.
I, from those fragments, jeweler-wise,
this precious treasure cut to size,
So that the experts who assay
all efforts, this most worthy weigh.
That which was left by him half-said
I say; the half-pierced pearl I thread;
While that which I found right and true,
just as before I've left to view.
I strove that this fair jointure, too,
should be adorned in foreign hue.
Again I sought, from books concealed
and scattered through the world's broad field;
From Persia's speech, and Araby's;
Bukhari's pen, and Tabari's;
From other texts, all scattered wide:
each pearl, in hiding, cast aside.
The pages coming to my hand
I wrapped in leather, tied with band.
When all was chosen, ordered well,
when 'neath my pen's black ink all fell,
A poem I wrote that would win praise,
and not the scholars' laughter raise.
This written temple I've adorned,
with seven brides, like Magian Zand,
So that, should the sky-brides decide
to turn their gaze upon my brides,
Through like affairs and ornaments
each of them aid to mine might lend.
For when the seven lines converge,

one point at centre shall emerge.
The painter, ten designs in hand,
of one main thread yet grasps the end;
If that thread from the line should stray,
the others would be set awry.
Though one trace not this thread aright,
rightness remains, nor quits our sight.
I follow this thread, painter-wise;
on that main thread I've fixed my gaze.
This single thread's with peril fraught
since such abundant pearls I've brought.
One must wash in a thousand streams
to find one fit to drink, and clean;
From but a droplet man is made;
yet how much water's thrown away.
If, shell-like, I from raindrops make
a pearl, I'm surely worth my keep.
Sweeter than honeyed morsels are
my words; how should not bounty hear?
But why wind on about such things?
I'm nought; the luck-star fortune brings.
Firdawsi's bounty, Mahmud's greed
the Bow and Scorpion decreed.
Bu Dulaf kept in fruitful ease
Asadi, since their signs agreed.
What do I say? what idle words;
my prince's rain forms precious pearls.
If the cloud nourishes the shell,
it sees in turn its due fulfilled.
When rain it scatters from the skies
the shell with royal pearls replies.
By Gabriel taught, my reed-pen's muse
my marks on paper thus construes:
'Go, deck this muse-taught magic fine
in garments new for New Years' time;
From demons' eyes keep it concealed,
to none but Solomon revealed.
Here lies my pith; seek me therein:
the rest's a mouldering bit of skin.
I'm pure wax, by no seal impressed,
with neither bees nor honey blessed,
Till Solomon, with his own seal,
impress upon me what he will.
Whether I'm honoured or disgraced,
the prince's scribe will seal my fate.
In weighing words I give the full
of worth, debasing not their gold.
If none will buy my musk so fine,
it still perfumes this silk of mine.
Those poets rare who sang their songs
grew old, departed, now sleep long.
I, their executor, to their
sage legacy the noble heir:
None more than I has made anew
those ancient modes that men once knew.
Although of words I may fall short,
of meanings I give full report;
Like dreams, I found an empty rind,
in answer left the pith behind.
And yet, with all my rare new lays,
I turn not from those ancient ways.
My fine-strung pearls bring me no gain,
but measuring the wind in vain.
What have I, jeweller-wise, not weighed
of precious gems and wealth arrayed?,
So many private treasures breached,
but found no key to bring release.
And now, with all this plenteous hoard,
I seek forgiveness from my Lord.
Nizami! Jesus' breath your speech,
and Mary's tree your wisdom rich:
Now you have scattered wide its dates,
rest well! good fortune is your fate.
5.
In Praise of the August Ruler.
May God illumine him!
Oh heart, how long these fancies weave?
How long illusions vain conceive?
I'll quit these false imaginings
and turn my thoughts to better things.
The goal I've chosen in this sphere,
fourfold, is better than spring's cheer.
The first part is the praise of God
Whose grace maintains this mortal world.
The next the Prophet's praise has been,
he who renewed this world's old coin.
And then, praise of the sovereign king,
which from my lips rare pearls shall bring.
The final chapter counsel gives
to him, may he victorious live:
That king whose rule the Seven Climes,
unto his fortune bound, proclaim.
The kingdom's proof, in word and might;
his rule a wonder in time's sight.
Crown-giver and king-maker he,
showering on all his treasury.
al-Din, the kingdom's base,
protector, guard of time and place.
Korp Arslan the world-conquerer, he
whose state excels Alp Arslan's sway.
Upholder of Aq Sonqor's line,
through whom his sires perfection find.
Sun of this world, a saviour sage,
whose rule will seal this final age.
A Rustam whose steed strides the sky;
both great, and giving greatness, he.

The heavens' mate, the rain-cloud's palm,
a lion in form as well as name.
When Being's lock had found its key,
one Essence caused this world to be.
He is that world, from whose hand rain,
each moment, pearls without end.
His wisdom makes Heaven's book leaf out;
his bounty makes the shamed sea sweat.
Both land and sea his rule commands,
his praise sung by their denizens.
His noble nature soars to heights
unreachable by flagging thoughts.
In greatness like an angel he,
the sphere's twin in nobility.
Shroud-stitcher for his foes, his blade,
like lightning, sets their mail ablaze.
Before him conquest bows its head;
sedition drowns in his sword's waves.
His bright blade sets the sky aflame;
his noble earth the air perfumes.
In war, where lions grow faint from dread,
his foes' swift steeds crash down in death.
When grapes' blood in his cup is poured,
that frozen crystal fire brings forth;
And when he hones his blade for war,
for Armageddon all prepare.
But when he opens bounty's mine,
he gives great wealth, forgives great crime.
Sea-like, not grudging, ever true,
the whip and sword his ebb and flow.
That which by force of sword he's gained
he gives as if the whip ordained.
Like Jupiter he strides the sphere;
his steed's hoofs black Saturn inter.
If you've not seen a lion ride
a dragon; a sun draw a sword,
Behold the king, in fray and hunt,
a dragon-burner on a lion.
Beneath his dragon flag, his lance
cleaves the fell dragon like a snake.
With two-barbed shaft, his narrow aim
prepares wide graves for raging lions.
Fierce bears are vanquished by his sword,
and lions tamed like dancing bears.
His lion-taking no drunken riot:
he tames the lion with dragon's might.
Near Mount Sahand, his two-barbed shaft
struck hand and foot a ravening wolf;
That feat would make the fiercest lion
tremble with fear in all its limbs.
His bolts, which strike down pards and wolves,
make the plain strait for asses' hoofs.
His hunting-ground's a sea of blood,
now striped like wolves, now spotted pard.
When 'gainst the boar he draws his blade,
the boar flees from its blow. The hide
Of stags, when he his bowstring bends,
becomes a grave enfolding them.
And when he treads the battlefield
he makes the very stones to bleed.
His deadly blade makes fierce sparks fly,
and raises smoke from earth to sky.
Famed both in battle and in feast,
his cup gives life, his sword life takes.
The earth is darkened by his light;
the eye is brightened by his sight.
His nature, like an artist's reed,
scatters black musk and rubies red.
His musk and rubies everywhere
string necklaces, perfume the air.
His crowned head, his robes of might,
make heaven and earth abased and slight.
His conqueror's bow, for its least dart,
takes the ninth heaven as its mark.
His thought such greatness does display,
the elements proclaim his sway.
Upon his gates his enemies
are nailed fast, like uprooted trees.
Moon-like beneath his sun of might,
his foes' are black, our faces bright.
What wonder? for that gold-shod sun
gave mountains rock, gems to the mine.
The mine's bright gems their secrets gave
to him; the mine it self’s his slave.
His life-giving largesse confers
the mountain's rubies, the sea's pearls.
He guards two rules in two abodes:
the rule of man, and that of God,
Receiving power from God's grace,
conveying it unto His slaves.
May all his days most favoured be,
who's brought the world brave victory.
On all his days may Fortune shine,
and may his kingship never decline.
And may his sons, by Fortune favoured,
be ordered, pearl on pearl, forever.
Sun-like, may he be ever bright
from those two bright-faced dawns' pure light.
Two princes they, of high estate;
one learning seeks, one conquests makes.
One wise and sage as Faridun,
one Kaykhusraw in conquering.
One's image crown and throne both show:
Nusrat al-Din Muhammad Shah.
The other's on Heaven's vault engraved,
for 'He who follows me is praised.

Two forms, their noble source the same,
one Ahmad, one Muhammad named.
See how both these auspicious names
within one circle are contained:
Two sides formed by a single line,
how can one any difference find?
One is of victory the key;
one conquers Heaven, plain to see.
One's strategy the earth commands,
the other's piety gains Heaven.
One has through victory raised a throne;
to one the sphere has fortune given.
May the king's eyes, beneath the sky,
be ever made bright by theirs; and may,
In north and south, his course of rule
be ordered by these noble poles.
May Fortune be his fatted prey,
his life most happy night and day.
And may that veil which hides his night
be of Muhammad's lineage bright.
He, generous as the planets; she
the seal of being's nature. May
Eternal Khizr be his name,
and she the Stream of Life in fame.
In the dark Solomonic night
may Bilqis' throne be given light.
May the king's shade, light's fountain, ever
to rose and rose garden be near.
Forever has he given succour;
may his kingship endure forever.
6.
Address of Homage.
Oh you whose mitre fortune serves,
whose crown and throne the world preserve:
The night, your Hindu watchman swart
the moon's bright bells has round him girt;
Dawn, a lone rider, girt with Sun,
breathes at your stirrup sweet perfume.
Your loyal slave, Daylam-crowned dusk,
owes to your court's fair plants his musk.
Greek day would be a black like night
should you dismiss him from your sight.
The heavens' great feast, with stately spread,
can muster but two disks of bread;
But he you pay the least can sup
the seven planets in one cup.
The signet of God's victory
in you seals perfect sovereignty.
The sky, of which the sun's a trace,
is the least girdle round your waist.
From the sphere's gold the moon has formed
its own pale copy of your throne.
The water of the spring, so pure,
is brackish when compared to you.
Your sword makes rubies show as clay;
your patience melts the hills away,
Those kings who reign the world around,
each to his hand a cloud has bound,
But save for yours, a cloud of spring,
theirs are all clouds that winter bring.
They lay no feast without bloodshed,
and take a life ere they give bread;
But he on whom your shadow's thrown
you summon late, but cherish soon.
He knows of virtuous men the worth
who's studied many books of art.
Who knows not art from fault: what man
of virtue could wish gain from him?
Kingship gains honour from your being;
men everywhere your praises sing.
As guardian of bounty's realm,
your fortune does this world maintain;
Such light to state and faith you've given
as from spring clouds no garden's seen.
The Kayanids, by Fortune blessed,
seven feats, twelve champions possessed;
Those feats, those champions, that you boast
are Heaven with its mighty towers.
The world's a body, Iran its heart
(no shame to him who says such words!);
Iran, the world's most precious heart,
excels the body, there's no doubt.
Among the realms that kings possess,
the best domain goes to the best:
You are the heart; and in like way,
the kingdom's heart you hold in sway.
Like Khizr and Alexander famed,
your knowledge, justice, all the realm
Illume. If Alexander made
a mirror of iron; if Khizr sped
To the Water of Life, your breast so pure
is mirror; Life's stream within you flows.
May God protect from evil's bane
the realm which boasts of such a king.
From your renowned good fortune, all
do you 'The Seven Climes' fortune' call.
The Fifth Clime's by your rule enriched;
in you rejoice the other six.
All regions, seeing your benign
beneficence, long for your reign.
Four kings, four royal jewels have owned,
and you the fifth, your life be long!
Much wisdom Alexander bore
from Aristotle's precious store.
Nushirvan's feast with heaven vied
since Buzurgmihr his earth did stride.

Parviz a Barbad had, whose airs
a hundred, nay, a thousand, were.
That great king, Malikshah by name,
had his Nizam, of pious fame.
But you, whose crown far greater be,
have such a poet as Nizami.
Oh you who give Nizami fame,
whose work is ordered by your name:
All other princes boast in vain
of their largesse: an idle claim!
Their seeds upon salt ground they shower
and in blind eyes collyrium pour.
The seed that's on the salt earth cast
will bear no fruit but sore regret.
Trees must be planted in such earth
as Paradisal fruits brings forth.
When wine is poured upon the ground
how should the farmer's name be known?
Save you, whom right and learning guard,
who's generous to himself? Indeed,
I've seen that you protect all men
of learning; that you honour them;
Buy not the alchemist's false ruse,
nor yet the tricks of coarse buffoons.
This everlasting poem's design
I've bound to your felicitous name.
Happy that man whose seed, well cast,
returns such harvest to his house,
That, long as it endures, his name
opens its pages, spreads his fame;
Not such that, when time passes by,
the sphere will cross it out for aye.
Since, in this cycle of time, I've brought
a dish with seven pictures wrought,
To sup will make your soul rejoice;
enjoy it; 'tis your sustenance.
I've given it garnish of my soul.
and offered it to you withal.
O you whose kinship elevates
the sphere; sphere-born and sphere-related:
How should I, earth-born, soar the sphere,
or reach the angels, a human mere?
I sought, with help of sugared pen,
to make the earth grow green again;
Provision my way with sugar sweet,
to pour it out at the king's feast.
If not so privileged, I am yet
the king's night-watchman, vigilant.
The king's a world-illuming sun
whose brilliance makes my tears to run.
Though sun on water casts its light,
water can't reach the sun so bright.
But though my eyes can't bear the sun,
I can conceive it through the mind.
The sovereign's treasure lacks for naught,
save this new-minted coin I've brought.
Now by your generosity,
accept it, that it be raised high.
Watered by clouds, the mountain fields
disdain the water of the well.
The water of that hand I've sought,
and closed my mouth to other draughts.
To price my pearl would spoil its worth;
before the king I offer it:
Should my new Venus-like song please,
as to the moon you'll point to me;
But if you find my picture small,
the wind will such poor dust dispel.
Live long, who faith and justice own;
you've those; may God your life prolong.
May all good things Fortune bestows
keep lasting faith with you; and those
Your lofty favour not esteem
be far from you and your domain.
As long as Heaven's sun shall shine,
health to your friends; your foes struck blind,
And, with their straitened hearts, cast down
stones on their heads, their heads on stones.
May your perception ever grow
greater in wisdom; may you long
Endure; may ruin's hand dwell far
from your domains, for ever more.
7.
In Praise of Discourse, and a Few Words of Wisdom.
That which at once is new and old
is discourse; let its tale be told.
The mother 'Be!' hath never born,
than discourse, any better son;
Say not the eloquent are dead;
'neath waves of speech they've disappeared.
But should you mention one by name,
fish-like, he'll raise his head again.
Discourse, like to a flawless soul,
the keys to unseen treasure holds.
It knows the story yet unheard,
and reads the yet unwritten word.
Look round: of all that God has made,
what else, save discourse, does not fade?
The sole memorial of mankind
is discourse; all the rest is wind.
Strive, from the worlds of mineral,
plant, animal, and rational,
To learn what in creation lives
that to eternity survives?
He who his own self truly knows,
triumphant over this life goes.

Who knows not his design must die;
but who can read it, lives for aye.
When once you know yourself aright,
though gone, you shall not pass from sight.
Those who life's mysteries ignore
come in through this, go out that door.
Doors cleaned of smoke, windows of grime:
yet none can see, what use the sun?
Each with himself is well content;
no one will his own garden tend.
All offer clever pretexts; nor
will any say, 'My milk is sour.'
Wise men, who have great knowledge gained,
don't bend their minds to empty sums;
The man of substance plans ahead;
when substance lacks, 'tis as I've said.
But such a man, though sharp, no doubt,
requires a guard; there's thieves about!
The Chinese merchant, loading musk,
guards it with gum against the thief.
The hoopoe, 'neath the eagle's wing,
in flight leaves other birds behind.
The famed are not immune to sin;
only the base are free from stain.
In search of grain, the clever bird
falls in the trap with both feet snared.
He who's a glutton like the earth,
takes from it but a stomach's worth;
Though all its stores be well devoured
and plundered, not a grain falls short;
For all you gather, grain by grain,
you one by one give back again.
If, candle-like, you'd seek a crown
of gold, tears will your laughter drown.
That draught of pearls and rubies made
brings little joy, but tears unstayed.
Each person has a hidden friend,
a confidant, that help will lend:
'Tis wisdom, from which succour comes;
he has all things who wisdom owns.
Who gives not wisdom it’s just due,
though man in form, his nature true
Is demon-like; angelic men
are those with wisdom, wondrous thing!
All was decreed when Time began;
men strive today, but reap no gain.
Strive to improve your nature; sloth
leads but to Hell; to Heaven, work.
He who's imprisoned by his deeds,
if he's not good, he will be bad.
To think the worst of others; that's
the habit of the bad man; but
Who thinks the best of others, wins:
goodness is from good conduct born.
Live such that, if a thorn appears,
you will not reap your foes' sharp jeers;
Lest this one say, 'His faults have shown,'
or that, 'His just reward has come.'
If no one takes your hand, at least
at your death he won't stamp his feet
In joy. Who treats you well is best;
not he who's by your sorrow pleased.
Don't eat in front of those who fast,
or else, make sure they join your feast.
Don't weigh your gold before the poor,
lest they twist, snake-like, with desire.
Though New Year's breeze may gently waft,
best not light lamps before its draft.
Man does not live to eat his fill,
but that he may seek sense and skill.
A dog is nobler than the man
whose eyes, ass-like, for fodder scan.
Then strive to serve mankind; 'tis so
your nature will adorn the world.
One who's good-tempered, like the rose,
smells sweetly everywhere he goes.
Have you not heard the wise man tell,
'He dreameth best who sleepeth well'?
He who's bad-tempered at his birth
will be that way until his death;
But he who's with good temper born
will meet a good and happy end.
Don't take things hard; for many a one
like you, the coarse earth's fed and slain.
What use to deck out earth, when ye
who bear earth's form, half ashes be.
If someone says, 'Pure reason must
arise from man, and man's from dust,'
Say, 'From the thorny rose there comes
rose-water; life from the snake-stone.
Strive with the world; its wiles abhor;
don't pitch your tent in dragon's maw.
Seek not the dragon's friendship; for
the dragon does all men devour.
A dog may wear a patched cloak; but
its currish nature's not forgot.
When friends fall out and quarrel, see
how speedily their foes agree.
Like flies over black and white they flock,
make black seem white and white look black.
'Tis better to avoid such thieves,
and cut this fourfold purse away.
In times when pious men are base,
the Josephs wolves, the ascetics dazed
With drink, one only 'scapes from peril
by doing, or approving, evil.

May God forbid His servants place
such bonds as these upon their legs.
They kindle fires for Hell's sake,
seek naphtha, and pour talc away.
Rise; let us stamp out all sedition;
observe obedience's condition.
How long seek gold to answer dearth?
How long be bound by sky and earth?
The harsh wind rends the tulip's robes
in search of bits of bloody dross;
Since wormwood bears no golden coin,
the wind does not assail its form.
Don't, like the cloud, bear treasure on
your head; rise over it, like the sun,
That, when earth's moistened by the cloud,
your sun-like kiss turn it to gold.
Scatter your gold upon the sun;
break sun-like rubies with a stone.
'Tis wrong gold makes your eyes shine bright,
for wisdom's the world's true delight.
'Gold' is two letters, unconnected;
how should you boast of something scattered?
Don't fill your heart with gold, like earth,
lest, like 'gold', you be scattered forth.
Those beauties that have golden forms
are by blue mourning robes adorned.
Each scale which deals with gold is stoned
before a thousand doors. Assume
That, with great effort, you've obtained
of wealth, lawful or not, some grains:
Some reckless rogue steals them away
and lives, while their collector dies.
To spend gold brings rejoicing; but
'tis pain and fear to lay it up.
'Tis loving gold, not its expense,
that kills the self with pain immense.
See how the fool who seeks a stone
sets friends at war, one against one.
'Tis best to quit this earthly ruin,
which brings you nought but fear and pain.
How long be porter for the world,
hiding gold's burden in the earth?
Though you may own three porters' loads,
you'll gain but the four porters' abode.
'Tis earth and air that are your foes:
unfriendly earth, air full of woes.
The thorn torn from the date-palm's crown
will serve the cooking fire to turn.
Thick noodle soup will better fill
the stomach, than rose-petals will.
Pull out your teeth; don't eat your fill;
then you'll be worthy as the pearl.
See, with its thousand teeth, the comb
can dress the beard of anyone.
Before you taste time's remedy,
a thousand poisoned draughts you'll see.
From this world's butcher-shop you'll gain
no portion witherite causing pain.
A hundred hearts are rent in twain
before a fat haunch is obtained.
A thousand necks are cast aside
in favour of a fattened thigh.
One sets his foot upon a treasure,
another toils for trifling measure.
Since none achieves his goal, 'tis best
to have none, than for many quest.
The man who late his goal achieves
finds joy in his long-travelled life.
Long life is best, for one will find
his goal perfected through long time.
The slow-born ruby long endures;
the swift-come tulip swiftly goes.
How long, like candles, brightly glow?
Consume yourself, your self to show.
Cast off these hoofs of beast-like greed;
from this clay vat pull out your head.
Cut off this seven-rooted branch;
these four-nailed horseshoes, too, renounce.
Don't pass over this straw-covered pit
like stones and straw that cover it.
Like lightning, die while flashing bright;
rude health's eclipsed by virtuous life.
Do as your masters teach, if you
are a disciple; follow true
The path that leads to wisdom; put,
with perfect faith, your trust in God.
I, who untie a hundred knots,
possess a village, dwell without.
If from the road a guest should come,
who then will lay the feast for him?
Reason knows well of what I speak;
by this allusion, what I seek.
I don't despair, despite my want;
I blame but those who earn complaint.
The Ethiop scorns my Turkish wares,
rejects the fine foods I prepare.
When I was raw as unripe' grapes
in this, old nature's cooking-place,
Time pressed me like a grape unripe,
to make collyrium for the sight.
Since I grew ripe, I've suffered from
the stings of bees, just as the wine
That's poured upon the earth is lost.
Is not the grape's worth more than that?
I tread the path on which I'm driven,
the name of 'frozen water' given;

They say that water, frozen cold,
is not water, but a spring of gold;
They err: still water silver forms,
as silvery ice of this informs.
Whenever did silver like gold seem?
they're different as the moon and sun.
Sim without ya is miss (that's brass),
especially when they're reversed.
Observe my iron, inlaid with gold,
its silvery work in speech unfold.
Ironmongers would wear golden robes
who iron at silver's prices sold.
Woe to the goldsmith when, assayed,
his gold is less than silver weighed.
The world's harsh treason chafes me: luck's
the source of fortune, wisdom's not.
That keen assessor who knows coin
owns not a half-grain, while the man
Who can't tell cotton plants from flax,
nor ships and shoes from sealing-wax,
With finest stuffs fills up his hoard:
with loads of silks, and chests of gold.
If this is gold and silver's case,
why should one then fear idleness?
How long should we this ruin grieve,
and draw up water in a sieve?
All from the antechamber call;
one day our turn will come withal.
Others, like me, this tale have told,
and, at the end, have found repose.
It was my task to grasp it firm,
lest sleep should seize me in my turn.
The traveller must have supplies,
and flee the perilous places. I
Walk on; my donkey does not follow;
I can't believe that on some morrow
I too will leave; I'll only know
when I have passed beyond that door.
How long, in ignorance, shall I
go on; string pearls with closed eyes?
Forget your eyes, and silence keep;
be confidant of secrets deep.
All that you know, know this, and heed
you take in error, or misread.
The flood has swept the road away;
discard your spade; see how the sky
Digs pits for men within the earth;
the earth recks not such spades as yours.
Consider: when you first were born,
what did you have of what you own?
From day and night you'll bear away
what you brought with you that first day.
Your neck weighed down with borrowed gems
from earth and sea: how can you then
Dance with the sphere? repay your loan;
let but you and an empty mount
Remain. Without a grain of this
world's burden, go wherever you wish.
Before your crown's pulled from the throne,
you must cast off what wealth you own.
One day a hundred blossoms must
fall to the ground 'neath envy's dust.
I, like the rose, of weapons shorn,
have also fled from envy's thorn;
Donned a patched cloak, in hope this might
scatter pure talc on flames of spite;
For even so is the road travelled
that passes through this place of peril.
When I've bid this old inn farewell,
say to the sphere, 'Do what you will.
How long, Nizami, dwell in bonds?
Arise! send forth your voice in song;
Devote your soul to Unity,
and gain, forever, Felicity.
8.
The Poet's Advice to his Son.
Those students in the school of 'Kun!
when they discourse's lesson learned,
Made knowledge treasurer of deeds,
and solved creation's mysteries.
All travelled to their place of rest,
and, when the time for sleep came, slept.
My son, give heed to what I say:
when I have slept, be you awake.
Since you from the eternal garden bear
a rose; by happy fortune wear,
Auspicious seal! the Prophet's name,
sound then the drum of praise and fame.
With your good name's die stamp your coin;
let honour raise you up to Heaven,
So that, in my confinement, I,
by your greatness, will be raised high.
Seek those of good repute for friends,
that they may bring you a good end.
Better a friend with breath that's foul,
than one whose words are nonsense all.
'Tis fault enough that one bad friend
gives to a hundred a bad name.
One simple prey that falls to him
a hundred more puts in his gin.
A needy man, who swallows gold,
brings brigands to the pilgrims' road.
Don't sleep, like old men, on that way;
beware those that on weak men prey,
That in this transient, upturned dome,
woman-like, you're not duped; you, a man,

Heed not your mount's dance, as he goes;
beware the perils of the road.
Like a white falcon, if you fly
along this road, fix well your eye,
Sun-like, upon this hunter's road;
the sky is armed with shaft and bow.
Although your iron may be pure,
the road's a stone, a lodestone sure.
Load your mount lightly, that it not
remain upon this sharp ascent,
For many knots have hidden keys;
in many hardships there is ease.
How many dreams the heart distress
which, read aright, mean happiness.
Though sorrow's arrow pierce the heart,
the mail of patience turns its dart.
Make firm your pact with God, and prise
your heart away from other ties.
If to this pact you cleave, you will
escape (I swear) from every ill.
Don't cast the precious pearl away,
but from the evil-natured flee.
The evil-natured's true to none;
nor will he miss a chance to sin.
How should he bow? have you not heard
the saying, 'Nature does not err'?
The scorpion, since its nature's ill,
'tis harm to leave, and art to kill.
Learn wisdom, for when it's acquired,
you'll close and open every door.
He who is not ashamed to learn
draws pearls from water, rubies from stone;
He to whom wisdom's not ordained
at studying feels scorn and shame.
Many quick wits whose ears are dull
sell but base clay, not wisdom's pearls.
Many blind hearts, being taught, became
chief judges of the Seven Climes.
The hunting dog's half-eaten prey
is lawful food through teaching; say,
If teaching guides the dog aright,
a man might reach the angels' height.
Like blessed Khizr, know yourself,
that you may taste the Spring of Life.
No mortal source, that spring, but soul
with reason, reason with a soul.
Reason with soul's a godly gift;
a soul with reason, eternal life.
These two have only one result;
that you have both, there is no doubt.
Till from two you've not reached that One,
tell no one that he is no one.
When you find One, forget the two,
and both worlds you will surely rule.
Ignore three, for it bears no weight;
abandon two, that dualist;
Grasp tight the single thread, like men;
abandon two; turn three to One.
Till you leave not the third of three,
you'll never win Unicity.
Two left behind, don't speak in jest;
when you've found One, seek no pretext.
When you to this high station climb,
mere passion all you leave behind.
While you are young and sound of frame,
all your desires you'll soon obtain.
When the tall cypress falls to ground,
how can a remedy be found?
Now that you wear the world's fresh green,
follow that road, since you are keen:
Gird up your loins, like the red rose,
on faith's path; a tall cypress grow.
I, willow-like, in green no more,
my violets white, my tulips sere,
Through weakness have been left behind
from wearing royal belt and crown.
Much manly service I've performed,
but now no longer am that man.
Life's seized and bound me in its toils;
such is the custom of this world.
My wings were broken ere I fell;
now that I've fallen, who can tell
My state? How shall a handsome man
appear when smallpox visits him?
Though shadow threaten me, my shade,
protecting, is of virtue made.
All in this world a shadow find:
sheep run before, the wolves behind.
On none can I my trust bestow;
all men are wolves, though sheep they show.
Crude are those few who seem my friends;
in whom shall I seek safety then?
Though youth has left me, still it seems
that, willy nilly, greed remains.
The older aged bodies grow,
their greed demands yet more and more.
Is this coin but my own alone,
or do all suffer from this pain?
O You, my heart's physician, keep
my clay from bowing at others' feet.
How long the darkness? Give me light,
and heal my broken body's plight.
Oh, ease those cares which bring me woe;
this is an easy task for You.
My neck's escaped the rope; do not
weary it under base men's loads.

I am content, like the pearl-shell,
with but a grain, and lord as well
Of my own house; a better aid
is lordship, than base servitude.
The lion finds greatness when he frees
his neck from service's yoke; 'tis best
To give your bread to others, than
to eat sweetmeats from baser men.
Now dawn's sharp dagger rends the skies;
how long asleep? Nizami, rise,
Mine deeply; fret not at your toil;
open for all the treasure's door.
9.
The Story Begins: Bahram is Born.
The jeweller of the secret store
thus opens wide his treasure's door:
Heaven a two-panned balance owns:
one pan holds pearls, the other stones.
From it upon the piebald world
now stones, now pearls, are fiercely hurled.
Even so are offspring born to kings:
the child or sin or honour brings.
Sometimes a pearl brings forth a stone;
sometimes will amber rubies form.
Like stone to pearl, in worth and fame,
was Yazdigird to prince Bahram.
One struck, one cherished, wondrous fate!
But stones bear rubies, date-thorns dates.
Whoso was ruined by the lord,
the prince's gentleness restored.
On the first day that Bahram's dawn
bore from dark night the evil name,
Those wise in Heaven's alchemy,
of moon and sun knowing the ways,
Thought, in the scales which Heaven weighed,
to find but silver half-alloyed.
They found instead the purest gold;
from dull stone gems, from salt sea pearls.
They saw, auguring victory,
and world-brightening nobility,
Pisces ascendant, Jupiter therein,
and Venus, pearl to ruby joined;
The moon in Taurus; Mercury
in Gemini; Mars' apogee
In Leo clear; Aquarius
helped Saturn strong outstrip his foes;
The Dragon's Tail towards Saturn turned,
the sun in Aries. Thus in turn
Each star to his felicity,
like Jupiter, did testify.
With such portents as I have shown,
when fortunate Bahram was born,
His royal father, crude of thought,
did reason ripely; saw his fate:
That all his ripest thoughts were raw;
he reaps bad ends who evil sows.
Some twenty years before that time
some sons he'd had, but none lived on.
The astrologers advised him then
to send away his handsome son
From Persia to the Arabs' land,
his nurture-time with them to spend,
That he might there his fortune find,
each man finds honour in some clime,
And bring his luck to fruit; although
'tis said, 'Fortune's on lands bestowed.'
His father drew apart, both out
of love, and to preserve his life;
Like Canopus, outside his realm,
in Yemen's land he raised his throne.
He sent for Nu'man; gave that fair
red blossom to that garden's care,
That his anemone might bloom
when flowers were scattered by Nu'man;
Who'd teach to him all princely traits,
and rules of royal government.
Nu'man then bore him from the king,
his breast a litter for that moon.
That spring, more famous than the sea,
he held more precious than his eyes.
When four years over the youth had passed,
he grew an onager in craft,
A lion in boldness. King Nu'man
said to his son, 'My mind's in pain.
Our air is dry, our land is hot;
this princeling is of tender stock;
He needs a lofty nurturing place
whose head from earth to sky is raised,
That he may soar upon its heights,
be nourished by the north wind's breeze;
Dwell among pleasant airs; have sleep
and rest that will his life increase;
His nature's gem remain untouched
by earth's damp vapour and dry dust.'
Munzir then with his father went;
their thoughts to such a search they bent,
Seeking a high and spacious place,
from noxious heat and all harm safe.
10.
Of Simnar and the Building of Khavarnaq.
That region boasted no such fort,
and useless were all other sorts.
They summoned expert builders; smoothed
the way for such a task. All who
Proposed to do that task, could not
devise a plan that came out right;

Until Nueman heard news that such
a master was within his reach.
'A famed man dwells in Grecian lands;
clever? stone's wax within his hands;
Learned and skilled, of matchless art;
of Sam's race, and his name Simnar.
The whole world has observed his skill;
all praise him; he has built withal,
In Syria and Egypt, some
fine buildings, perfect everyone.
The Greeks bow to his skill; in Chin
from his pick artists chips do glean.
Although a builder, clearly he
a myriad artists holds in sway.
And, of sound judgement, he can tell
the secrets of the stars as well.
His gaze draws over the sphere a web,
like the spider of the astrolabe.
Like Apollonius wise, he can
devise and loose all talismans.
He knows the veiled ones of the sky,
the moon's raids, the sun's hostile eye;
He'll solve this problem; only he
can such a precious fabric weave.
He'll raise a vault from earth so high
that it will plunder from the sky
The stars' bright lamps.' Nueman, hot bent
in quest of Simnar's fire, then sent
A messenger to far-off Rum,
to woo, with wiles, Simnar to him.
So Simnar came; and so Nueman's
hope for that task grew sevenfold strong.
He sought from him what he desired,
and then prepared what he required.
All that that building might demand,
materials, tools, were readied. Then
The master's hands all measured well.
Five years he laboured on, until
He with his golden hands had made
a silvery palace of stone and clay,
Its tower rising to the moon,
the cynosure of everyone.
A palace richly decked with gold,
flame-hued, as only he could build;
A palace with a heavenly dome
round which the heavens' nine spheres turned;
A pole formed like those south and north,
whose fancies seemed like Teukros' work.
Its sight was rest to weary hearts,
its image water to the parched.
When the sun on it cast its rays,
the houris hid their dazzled gaze.
Within, a paradise of ease;
without, embellished like the skies.
Its roof, polished with milk and glaze,
reflected like a mirror's face.
Both day and night, both swift and slow,
like brides it would three colours show,
Of three opposing, varied hues:
now white, now yellow, and now blue.
From the sky's azure robes, at dawn,
like air, a blue-hued robe it donned;
Its face, when rose the journeying sun,
grew yellow as the sun; and when
The sun was veiled by clouds, it grew,
subtly, as white as clouds in hue.
Clad in the colours of the air,
it now grew black, and now showed fair.
When Simnar had achieved his task,
accomplished more than he was asked,
Its splendour overwhelmed the sky;
its brilliance gave the sun its light.
Nueman gave him the news of such
a great reward, the half of which
He had not hoped for: purest gold,
rare gems and musk, by camel-load,
Beyond all reckoning, that he
might once again of service be.
If with dry wood the fire's not stoked,
the meat thereon remains uncooked.
The generous hand, silver dirhams' hurt,
is guardian of bounty's court.
The architect, at this largesse,
hoped for more bounteous promises.
'If I had known before', said he,
'of all the king has promised me,
I would have made, in my design,
the best that all the world could find.
I would have taken greater pains,
and even greater treasure gained;
A palace built whose brilliance would
daily increase, long as it stood.'
Asked Nueman, 'Were you given more,
could you build better than before?'
'If you'd so wished,' he said, 'forewarned,
I'd built one to put this to scorn.
This has three hues; that would have owned
a hundred; it ruby, this but stone.
This shows but one sphere; that would seven
high domes display, like seven heavens.'
Nu'man's face kindled at these words,
his store of human kindness burnt.
The king's a fire; who sees its light
from far off will escape its heat;
A fiery rose-bush raining gems,
close by a rose, in its breast thorns.

The king's a vine, which does not twist
round plants that flourish far from it;
But that round which he closely twines
has branch uprooted, fruit brought down.
'If I spare him (he thought), with gold
and strength, he'll go elsewhere and build
A better place.' His men were called
to cast him from the fortress walls.
See how bloodthirsty earth cast down
the builder from his high design.
Long years he raised a palace; in
a moment Fortune threw him down.
He kindled fire, himself fell in
the smoke; climbed late, and fell low soon.
He raised it high, a hundred ells
and more; did not his fall foretell;
He'd not, had he his grave foreseen,
have bettered three ells by a span.
The throne's steps should not be so high
that, when you fall, you'll broken lie.
From that high building Nueman's fame
did cast its lasso round the moon.
Called 'mighty sorcerer' by the earth;
by men, the Lord of Khavarnaq.
11.
Of Khavarnaq, and How Nueman Vanished from his Kingdom.
When Khavarnaq, by Bahram's star,
became a garden fresh and fair
Heaven called it qibla of the earth;
earth judged it Chinese painters' work.
Hearing of it, from near and far
flocked thousands just to gaze and stare.
All those who saw sang praises loud,
and humbly at its threshold bowed.
Over its porticoes, in fair
calligraphy, flowed verses rare.
Since Canopus lit Yemen's land,
not moon nor sun had ever been
So praised. Like Aden's sea it strewed
fair pearls; the land with light infused.
Yemen grew famed by its design;
the world esteemed it like Iram.
It decked the world out like the Ram;
still more, since therein dwelt Bahram.
When Bahram mounted to its top
(and Venus bore his festive cup),
He found a round tower, the sphere's twin,
the moon without, the sun within.
Within, the sun in bright display;
without, the moon's light-giving rays.
The wind above blew ever fresh;
'twas safe from Autumn's cruel blast.
Beneath the castle walls, his gaze
roamed over a plain like Paradise:
On this side the Euphrates passed,
sweet as the Water of Life; on that
Sadir, like Sidra, throne-like, held
a village filled with oil and milk.
Before the plain, behind the mead,
whose soft airs musky perfume breathed.
Those royal heights one day Nueman
did climb to view; with him Bahram.
All round that vault, like Paradise,
he saw red tulips and green grass.
The plain a Shushtar carpet seemed,
where partridge plump and pheasant teemed.
Said he, 'Was ever a spot so choice?
In such a place one should rejoice.
The king's vizier was, in those days,
a Christian, practising just ways.
He said, 'To know one's God aright
is better than all-owning might.
Once you have found such wisdom fair,
your heart from worldly things you'll tear.'
That spark enkindled such a flame
that Nucman's hard heart soft became;
Since the sphere raised its seven forts,
no such siege-engine plied its work.
Nueman came down from that high dome,
lion-like the desert waste to roam,
Abandoned wealth and sovereignty,
faith and world ill-assorted be,
His Solomonic state foreswore
and, pert-like, was seen no more.
No more was he found in his place:
behold, the ruler of his age!
Although Munzir in search did fly,
his fortune's voice made no reply.
He greatly grieved, and it was due,
his house smoke-darkened, black in hue.
He held great mourning, as was fit,
and spent some days in pain and grief.
Since he could not flee crown and throne,
he occupied himself with them:
Banished injustice, brought forth right,
maintained the kingdom with his might.
His generals, who held troops and lands,
gained state and fortune from the king.
Bahram he held dear as his soul,
with father's love, nay, even more.
His own fine son, by name Nueman,
had shared a wet-nurse with Bahram.
Companions, of an equal age,
one from the other never strayed.
They grammar learned from the same slate,
and, feasting, scattered pearls in spate.

Like sun and bright light, not a day
was one from other far away.
The prince, within that lofty tower,
was raised and taught for several years.
Save study he had no delight;
to knowledge, reason was his guide.
The Persian, Greek, and Arab speech
a Magian master did him teach.
Munzir, that skilled and loving king,
knew well the heavenly reckoning:
The seven planets and twelve signs
disclosed their secrets to his mind.
With geometric lines he worked,
all problems solved, Mijisti-like.
He had surveyed the Nile-blue sphere
in every part. From secret stores
Of far-seeing vision, he had gained
great wisdom through his keenest mind.
Finding the prince in judgement wise,
a student skilled in mysteries,
He gently slate and stylus brought,
and Heaven's secrets to him taught.
Each secret notion that was hidden,
whether it spoke of earth or Heaven,
He joined together, one by one,
and taught the prince, until Bahram
Became so wise and learned that
he knew the truth of every art.
With true celestial reckoning
he took the veil from the unseen;
Then, setting up his style and slate,
unlocked the scheme of heavenly fate.
When he'd grown skilled in argument,
to learn the skill of arms he bent;
In weapons, riding, racing, bore
the ball from the polo-playing sphere.
He reached such heights of skill, he'd take
the claws from lions, sever wolves' necks.
Dawn's blade, at his spear-cast, threw up
the shield before his horsemanship.
His arrow pierced the granite rock
as though it were but silken cloth.
And when he shot his arrows forth,
a quiverful would hit the mark.
If with his sword he struck a stone,
it turned to water red as flame.
His lance would carry off a grain
of millet like a target-ring.
When he his marksmanship displayed
with hairs his well-aimed arrow played.
Or light or shade, whatever he'd see,
he'd hit, however far away;
And even that which he saw not,
his fortune hit as it deemed right.
The lion-guards of the flock of men
all boasted that he'd grown a lion.
Sometimes he would attack the pard,
sometimes with fiercest lions played.
All talk in Yemen, near and far,
was of him, hailed as 'Yemen's star'.

12.

How Bahram Hunted and Branded the Wild Asses.

When Bahram's fair Canopus bore
rawness from Yemen's hide, Munzir,
Like Yemen's leather by its star,
was brightened by his grace. Therefore
Nueman, Munzir, from their esteem,
a brother and a father seemed.
His loyal slaves in all affairs;
of such relations say no more.
One vied with him in studying,
one joyed with him in banqueting.
One strengthened him through learning's force,
and one rode out with him to horse.
The prince's horsemanship so gained
in skill, the skies gave back his name.
No pleasures save the chase had he,
and wine; impassioned of his prey,
He hunted onager; how can
the grave be spurned by mortal man?
The arrow speeding from his bow
dealt to his prey a deadly blow.
He had a swift-paced chestnut steed
that galloped smooth, with faultless speed,
As if its hoofs had sprouted wings;
it tamed the force of hurricanes,
And as its course it swiftly ran,
bore ball and disk from moon and sun.
Accustomed to the sphere's swift pace,
it faster than the wind did race,
Its twisting tail like hundred snakes;
its hoofs for onagers dug graves.
To hunt, the king rode forth that steed;
for others had no wish nor need.
When saddled up, its speeding pace
earned it the swift wild asses' praise.
It outstripped other mounts, and caught
all onagers in swift pursuit.
Sometimes, when weary, Bahram would
saddle that lion-swift steed. Its hoofs
Would trace the hunting ground with forms
fairer than idols. More than stones
In weight, he'd fill the hillocks there
with heaps of onager and deer.
'Neath his steed's hoofs, the level plain
grew hillock-heaps of asses slain.

When he, on his hill-coursing steed,
which raised no dust with its great speed,
Took up his noose to hunt, he'd seize
a thousand onagers alive.
He felled most with his mighty arm,
or with his noose; but never harmed
(Though he a hundred felled) a one
under four years; for he'd foresworn
The blood of any onager
that had seen less than four full years.
Upon its haunch he'd brand his name,
and let it once more roam the plain.
Whoever took a branded ass
alive (one of a hundred beasts),
On seeing the king's brand thereon,
would turn his thoughts from any harm,
And, placing on the brand a kiss,
would free the beast's legs from the noose.
I, branded with the sultan's name,
should with more speed my thanks proclaim.
With such a king, in mount and plain,
the branded beast escapes all harm.
In the world's graveyard there's no ant
that has not felt oppression's brand.
13.
How Bahram Slew a Lion and an Onager with a Single Arrow.
One day in Yemen's hunting-ground,
with Arab nobles all around,
The prince, who Bahram Gur was called,
from sphere and Mars bore off the ball;
The sport made him breathe hard; Nueman
behind, Munzir before, were stunned
In admiration, lost, amazed,
at the fine form the prince displayed.
Suddenly dust rose from afar
and earth and sky as one appeared.
The young prince urged his chestnut steed
towards that dust, with torrent's speed.
A lion, drawing his cruel claws,
rode on the back of a wild ass,
To bring it to the ground. The king
waited in hiding, his bow drawn.
He sought a sharply pointed barb,
strung it and loosed it at the mark,
The shoulder of both beasts its struck,
pierced both, passed clean through both, and stuck
Deep in the ground. What use to have
armour or shield, with such a shaft?
Lion and onager fell dead;
the shaft was buried to its head.
The ruler who had loosed it, bow
in hand, stood there. His mighty blow
The Arabs saw, and all approved
he should rule Persia. All who looked
Upon that prey then kissed his hand
in homage. Thenceforth was his name
Called 'Lion-Strength', though as before
he bore the title 'Bahram Gur'.
When they returned to town, the word
of lion and ass was widely spread.
Munzir then gave command to seek
skilled painters to record that feat.
In Khavarnaq they limned in gold
the lion above, the ass below,
The prince's shot, the bolt which found
both beasts, and lodged deep in the ground.
This work completed, all who saw
thought that it lived. 'May blessings fall',
They said, 'from Him Who made the world,
upon that prince so brave and bold.'
14.
How Bahram Gur Slew a Dragon and Found a Treasure.
One day, within his garden's heaven,
he launched his ship upon the wine.
He quickly drained a few cups down,
and, drunken, set out for the plain.
He loosed his lasso for the prey,
and onagers pursued that day.
So many felled he, by his power,
the plain with bones was covered over.
A female onager appeared
at last, whose sight the whole world stirred.
A vision of the soul she seemed;
bright was her face, her forehead beamed.
Her back was streaked like golden money,
her belly daubed with milk and honey.
From head to hoof a musky line;
from hoof to head all spotted fine.
Her rosy mane, in housing's place,
a silken veil cast over her face.
Her form outdid all of her kind;
her haunches left her form behind.
A flame grown friendly with the grass;
a beauty garbed in beggar's rags.
Her legs like arrows, straight and long;
her ears two diamond daggers drawn.
Her breast was elegant and straight;
her ears stood high above her neck.
Like saddle bands, two stripes of black
adorned the curve upon her back.
From those black bands, her upper half
gained that which silver gains from black.
Fat sides and ruddy neck: the one
like pearls, the other carnelian.
Like wine-red silk drawn over her form
her red blood coursed through her neck-veins,

And, swiftly pulsing, her dark blood,
like a black drummer, beat and throbbed.
Her haunches neighbours with her tail;
hoof scratching neck, as if in play.
Seeing Bahram, the ass leapt forth;
Bahram Gur followed the ass.
The ass was swift indeed, and young;
the hunter followed like a lion.
From break of day to setting sun,
that lion in train, the ass ran on.
He chased that gur; turned not aside;
for how can one the grave avoid?
Ass-King behind, the ass before:
gur, Bahram Gur, and no one more.
Until they reached a cave, remote,
where human kind had never set foot.
Nearing his prey, the hunter saw
a dragon lying in wait before
The cave; a pitch-black mountain, coiled
in twisting loops against the foe.
When the king saw this dreadful sight,
he grew a dragon in his might.
Fear of the grave his pleasure drowned;
with hand on hip, he stood his ground,
And, marvelling, thought, 'What prey is this?
Why bring me here? What plan is this?'
He knew well, from the beast's alarm
She'd suffered from the dragon harm,
And sought the prince, whom just she knew,
to do her justice on the foe.
'If I call this a dragon, not
an ant, I'll be ashamed,' he thought,
'Even in death. I must requite
the ass, without fear for my life.
Let be what will be.' Then he sought
a swift, two-headed poplar shaft,
Placed it in his white bow, and shot
it at that dragon black as night.
The dragon opened wide his eye;
the prince his twin-barbed bolt let fly.
Both barbs within those eyes did light;
forever closed the path of sight.
The forged tips of the prince's barbs
sewed tight that pitch-black dragon's orbs.
The dragon in such straits, the king
attacked him like Leviathan.
Just as the lion claws the ass,
towards the dragon's throat he cast
His lance (six sides, eight feet in length);
the dragon's mouth and throat it rent.
The dragon gave a mighty cry,
and crashed to earth like a felled tree.
The king feared not its awful coils:
does the cloud fear low-lying hills?
With iron that demon's head he cut;
'tis best that foes be dealt with thus.
He cleft its form from stern to stem,
and found the ass's foal therein.
He knew for sure the vengeful beast
has summoned him revenge to wreak.
He knelt and gave his thanks to God:
the dragon slain, and he alive;
Then sought again his steed to mount,
and turn once more unto the hunt.
Seeing his restlessness, his prey
ran up and went into the cave.
Once more, to seize the ass, the king
entered that narrow opening.
When, with much toil, he'd gone some way,
he found a treasure; smiled with joy.
Many great jars were placed therein,
veiled like the peri-faced from men.
Bringing the Ass-King to that cave,
the wild ass left without a trace.
When the king found the treasure's key
and severed the dragon from it, he
Came out again from that narrow cave,
and found a guide to show the way.
His special guards, after a space,
seeking the king, followed his trace.
As one by one they joined the king,
around their lord they formed a ring.
The king gave orders to his men,
both bold and strong, to go within
The treasure-cave, bring out the hoard,
and load it up. That heavy load
Was borne away by camels, young,
of Bactrian race, sturdy and strong.
A king who to a wild ass gives
justice; imprisons in a grave
A dragon, finally, for his pains,
salvation and a treasure gains.
Returning to Khavarnaq, he
dispensed it with festivity:
Ten camel-loads of treasure sent
unto his father, Iran's king;
Ten more to Munzir and his son
he gave, with other precious things.
He spent it all, without the fear
that anyone might interfere;
And, having opened such a trove,
what dear was gained he cheaply gave.
Munzir then called a painter; him
he bade a painting new to limn;
The painter took his brush in hand,
painted the dragon and the king.

With all such feats Bahram performed,
the painter Khavarnaq adorned.
15.
How Bahram Saw the Paintings of the Seven Beauties in Khavarnaq.
One day the prince, come from the plain,
through Khavarnaq did joyful range.
He saw a secret room, locked fast,
through which no servant ever passed,
Nor courtier nor treasurer;
the prince had never entered there.
'Why is this room locked fast?' said he;
'where is the keeper, and the key?'
The keeper came, gave up the key;
the door unlocked, what did he see?
A chamber like a treasure-store,
which turned to jewellers all who saw.
The pictures on its walls excelled
a hundred Chinese temples; all
That finest art and skill could form
of pictures, did its walls adorn.
Seven beauteous images there hung,
each one connected with a realm:
Furak, the Raja's daughter fair;
more than the moon's her beauty rare.
Yaghma-Naz, daughter of the Khaqan,
charmer of Chin and Turkestan.
Khwarazmshah's daughter, Naz-Pari:
a graceful, strutting partridge she.
The Slav king's daughter, Nasrin-Nush,
a Chinese Turk in Grecian dress.
The Maghreb's princess, Azaryun,
a sun like day-increasing moon.
Wise Qaysar's daughter, fair Humay,
noble in name and nature she.
Kisra's daughter, of Kaykavus' line,
fair as a peacock, Durr-Siti named.
One hand had drawn these seven forms,
by one cord in a circle hung,
Each, with a thousand beauties bright,
kindled the gem of vision's light.
An image in the midst therewith,
the others rind, this one the pith,
A belt of pearls circled his waist,
and musky down his moon-like face,
Like a straight cypress rising tall,
his form encased in silver; all
Those beauties gazed on him; each gave
her heart to him in perfect love;
He on those idols smiling sweet,
they all adoring, as was meet:
And over his head, in skilful script,
the name of 'Bahram Gur' was writ:
'Such is the seven stars' decree,
that such a conqueror come to be.
Seven princesses from seven realms
shall he embrace, like single pearls.
Not we ourselves this seed have sown:
what the stars showed us, we have shown.
We but the example show; 'tis God
alone, we say, Who'll bring it forth.'
When Bahram had this legend read,
at the sphere's spell he stood in dread.
Love for those princesses so fair
his heart invaded, hair by hair.
Such fecund mares, a stallion bold:
a lion-brave youth, and seven brides:
How should desire not fire his heart,
and, waxing, not attempt the mark?
Although surprised by that design,
his joy increased a hundred times,
For to his life it brought resolve,
and hope for his desire. For all
Which makes a man hope for completion
aids him in finding moderation.
When the prince left that chamber, he
locked the door; gave the steward the key,
And said, 'If I should ever hear
that anyone unlocks this door,
Within this room his blood I'll shed,
and sever from his neck his head.'
In all that house no woman or man
dared cast their eyes towards that room.
Sometimes, on drunken whim, the king
approached that chamber, key in hand,
And, entering into Paradise,
on those angelic forms would gaze;
And like one who, near water, thirsts,
would sleep, still moved by his desire.
Abroad, he but the hunt pursued;
at home, that room his sorrow soothed.
16.
How Bahram Heard of his Father's Death.
When his informers brought the king
reports about his son, Bahram,
'He lions takes with his bare hands
(see that old wolf, and this young lion!);
In contest lions to him are dogs;
he fells foul dragons to the dust;
Binds demons with his curving noose,
and levels hills 'neath his steed's hoofs;
His diamond blade makes silk of iron;
his iron makes paste of hardest stone',
His father feared that fiery youth,
and in his life saw his own death.
He feared that fiery-natured lion
as lions fear the leaping flame.

He kept him distant from his sight,
how dull the vision that lacks light!
Bahram still hunted night and day,
now rode the wind, now drank in play;
Quick to the chase and to the wine,
he, like bright Canopus, did shine.
From love for him, great Yemen's king
made all bow down to his command.
The wise and competent Bahram
he made the governor of his realm;
On him bestowed bright pearls, sharp blades;
his life (if asked) would not have grudged.
All that he needed, treasures, gems,
were his, without his toil or pain.
That favour he received abroad
made him forget his father's land.
When some time had elapsed this way,
the sphere a new game did display.
Yazdigird wearied of his throne,
so all that rises must come down,
And his ancestral throne and crown
did as it had to others done.
The throne once emptied of its king,
his subjects called a gathering,
That none of his line might remain,
no longer snakes and dragons reign.
Although Bahram was honoured still,
and known for wisdom, strength, and skill,
His father's tyranny decreed
his princely skills be set aside.
'We'll not consider him,' they said,
'nor tell him of his father's death;
For he, by desert Arabs reared,
for Persia's rule is not prepared.
He'd give the Arabs rule and wealth;
the Persian-born would suffer ill.'
(But, though none wished him on the throne,
God willed it so; gave him the crown.)
An aged sage they chose, and him
Just Ruler of the World proclaimed.
Though not entitled to the throne
he was of royal lineage sprung.
Upon his head they placed the crown,
and gave the seven-eyed belt to him.
When Bahram heard the news that Heaven
had brought one cycle to an end;
Begun another cycle, fresh,
in opposition to the past;
His father had given up the throne
and crown and, there being none to claim
Just rule, a stranger had stepped in,
and discord in the world begun;
He first held mourning rites, and clothed
his ruby form in turquoise robes.
Then, like a lion, he resolved
to draw the sword against his foes;
Extend his blade against them; make
war on them, his revenge to take.
Again he thought, 'Why play the beast?
'Tis better to use wisdom first.
Though they've done me a grievous wrong,
and from me due respect withdrawn,
Into their hard hearts I can't see;
'tis softness that will be the key.
With hearts like dogs, they are my prey;
the sheep-dogs in my pasture, they.
They creep about in their own wool,
but all are in my cotton field.
Let them be faithless, hard of heart,
till in the end with shame they smart.
From treachery accrues man's shame,
and brings him but regret and pain.
If not for shame, base things would be
but one more form of tyranny.
Unwisely, they've left my control;
I, wise, will make them worshipful.
When man's impatient of his prey,
his arrow quickly goes astray.'

17.

How Bahram Led his Army against Iran.

Cease, sorcerer, word-weaver fine;
how long old tales will you intone?
Breathe, like the rose, from mouth perfumed,
its scent enough your words to tune.
From first my covenant was drawn
with Him Whose pact is ever sound,
That what another poet spake,
though he lies sleeping, we're awake,
I would not make its thought my own;
for evil ways I'll not be known,
But, while I can, like New Year's breeze,
I'll never claim to mend old clothes.
Yet since the path to treasure's one,
a single mark, though arrows twain,
Though in my task of stringing pearls
I would not use another's words,
When repetition must be made,
I silk from sackcloth can create.
The ancient coin has been made new,
through alchemy of speech, by two:
That one from brass pure silver drew;
I'll turn to gold that silver. You,
Who've seen brass equal silver, should
not marvel when silver turns to gold.
The jeweller of this lofty throne
his necklace thus together joined:

When Bahram Gur became aware
a stranger Persia's crown did wear,
In rage he girt himself to claim
his Kayanid crown back again.
In his desire to claim his throne,
Nueman and Munzir aided him
With treasures more than can be told;
more jewels than any string can hold.
He raised a mighty army; grew
sharp, as his anger was renewed.
From Yemen unto Aden's strand,
a myriad horsemen fell in line,
In armour clad, for vengeance keen
to slay, take forts, and demons bind.
Each one in battle was a lion,
his sword defender of a realm.
The cavalcade set on its way;
its dust obscured both earth and sky.
Their wailing pipes and kettledrums
destroyed the courage of all men.
The drummers showered grievous wounds
upon their clamouring brass drums.
Their ferment caused both mount and plain
to boil up to the covering heavens.
Greater than locust swarms, ant hordes;
hot for revenge like Hell's own fire.
These, to secure the royal throne,
went to his capital from Yemen.
18.
How the Iranians Wrote to King Bahram.
To the usurper came the news:
A dragon raged with gaping jaws;
Heaven had turned towards the earth;
Canopus, risen, from Yemen shone forth;
The lion had spread its claws to take
its foe, like wild ass, to the grave,
To seize the throne and gain the crown;
to rule, and put disturbance down.
Nobles and generals all met
before the king's gates. There they sat
In council, pondered well, and sought
to set their differences at naught.
They wrote as reason did dictate,
in veiled words, for safety's sake.
The letter done, they folded it,
and set out to deliver it.
When they arrived, to the new king
Fortune voiced praise. The chamberlains
Were sympathetic; granted them
an audience. Then King Bahram
Gave orders to approach the throne
more closely. Fearfully they came
Before his throne, bowed low, and gave
thanks to the king, and offered praise.
He who was wisest of them kissed
the letter and delivered it.
The secretary broke its seal,
and to the conqueror read it all.
The name of God there held first place,
Who guides the errant with His grace.
Of high and low Creator; He
by Whom non-being comes to be.
From man to all that lives; from sky
above, to mighty mountain high:
In Bounty's picture-house, it is
His power which form to Being gives.
He knows no partner; for beyond
that One, in sovereignty, there's none.
He looses all creation's bonds;
the seal of praise is His alone.
Both space and time are in His hands;
all men bow down to His commands.
His praise of the Creator done,
the Persians' king addressed Bahram,
The sovereign prince, saluting him:
'O you who've raised your head to Heaven;
Both king by farr, and a king's son,
who chivalry and valour own:
How should I, Kisra's scion, be
bested by one less skilled than I?
Experienced, with virtue filled,
honoured and praised throughout the world;
Fostered by Fortune: how can one
less eminent gain crown and throne?
I've gained them through nobility;
no base man can be raised so high.
Yet, though I rule an earthly realm,
lead both the fairy race and men,
My kingship no contentment brings;
'tis honey that is laced with bane.
So great my wealth and riches were,
and ever young my fortune's star:
Would I had been content with that;
high places are with danger fraught.
The Persians, with both force and shame,
softened me with cajolings warm;
Made me determined to be king,
and raise myself to throne and crown.
I guard the realm from ruin; am
no sovereign, but a guardian.
How apt the well-known proverb: "When
desire's your foe, the world's your friend."
Of such a world you nothing know;
you rule a different world. To you
Roast onager is sweeter than
the thousand bitter woes of kings.

A drop of wine, sweet music sung,
excels all else that's under Heaven.
You have no cares but hunt and wine,
no headache from the pains of Time.
If truth you want: own of the world
enough that you be no one's churl;
Spend eve and night in hunt and feast;
now drink deep, now enjoy your rest:
Not day and night, like me, bereft
of joy; by men's affairs hard pressed;
Sometimes concerned with my friends' woes,
sometimes made anxious by my foes.
My least trial that, from such a king
as you, I must defend a crown.
O you who've been on pleasure reared,
from you such troubles have been far.
Would I were so employed; for then,
things would be easy. I would spend
All of my life in sweet pursuits;
caress my soul with wine and lute.
From kingliness you're not remote;
you know of faith and statecraft both.
The kingdom's heir in truth you be,
its rule your royal legacy.
But all your father's tyranny
has banished you from sovereignty.
For never his subjects did he treat
in ways that did not raise complaint.
All marvelled at this sinful man)
and called him "Sinner" for his crimes.
So much did he, for bloodshed's sake,
show sometimes harshness, sometimes haste,
That no one now will praise his seed
or plant within that ground. Indeed,
Since no one wishes you to reign,
'tis better you forsake this claim;
For if you boil, you'll find fierce heat;
hammer cold iron if you beat.
I myself, from my secret treasure,
will give you riches without measure;
Whatever state that you ordain,
to spend on it will be my gain.'
19.
How King Bahram Gur Answered the Iranians.
The letter fully read, a flame
leapt up from deep within Bahram;
But with a hundred efforts, he
did keep his patience, cleverly.
Despite his heat, he hastened not,
but answered after patient thought:
'What in this letter scribes have writ,
I've heard as they did read me it.
Although the scribes did lack in skill,
it indicates the speaker's will.
What lofty judgement it conveys
I laud, for it deserves my praise.
I, to whom earth and silver are
as one, to world rule don't aspire;
But 'twould be treason to consign
to others, the kingdom that is mine.
My father claimed to be a lord;
I God, Who wisdom gives, adore.
How different are the flesh and blood
of who loves lordship, and loves God.
I am excused of every crime
that I did not commit; for I'm
Far from my father's sins; if he
was hardest rock, a pearl am I.
From dark night comes the shining morn;
pure rubies from base stones are born.
Speak no more of my father's sins,
for God's delivered you from him.
If he did ill, now that he rests
in peace, speak no ill of the dead.
Where reason guides, who evil speaks
does so from heeding evil speech.
Though he was evil-natured, and bad
is said of him, 'tis worse to heed.
Pass over my father's crimes, and my
lack of experience; if the Eye
That's evil does not bar my road,
I'll seek forgiveness for his deeds.
If once I slept in negligence,
I've now foresworn my heedlessness.
The favoured man whom Fortune aids
sleeps only till 'tis time to act.
'Tis better that the eye not fight
with sleep; but when the time is right
Awake. Although my sleep was deep,
my wakeful fortune watch did keep,
And, vigilant, it aided me
and from my slumber wakened me.
Hereafter all my acts shall be
improved; my heart of laxness free;
Nor bent on idle pleasures; now
I'm ripe, my acts shall not be raw.
Pious opinions I'll respect,
and serve the public interest.
I'll overlook each person's faults;
not seek his head, nor crave his wealth.
I'll not recall past sins, but find
joy in the fortune of the time.
I'll deal as I should deal with you,
and take from you but what is due.
I'll broach no person's treasure; spend
the wealth that from my foes I gain.

Good judgement won't be strange to me;
evil, bad counsel, banished be.
Good men alone shall me advise,
and evil teachers be despised.
All favouritism I'll avoid
in judgement; act in shame of God.
Men's children, wives, and wealth shall be
safer than shepherd's flock with me.
The bread of no one will I seize
by force, but with more bread increase.
Desire's demon will not lead
me from the path; desire I'll pledge
'Gainst sin; nor show to any eye
that which my Maker would decry.'
When the king finished, minds were swayed;
the oldest priest arose and said,
'In kingly wise, you both bestow
wisdom on us, and wisdom show.
The wisdom which your words impart
inscribes its judgement on our hearts.
Your loftiness your kingship marks;
you must be shepherd of this flock.
Sovereignty to your nature's wed;
the crown is ours, but on your head.
Who else will Gushtasp's Zand revive?
bring to the Kayanids new life?
In you the seed of King Bahman
and Darius its image finds;
You, the new fruit of Siyamak;
scion of Ardashir Babak;
To Kayumars, with throne and crown,
your lineage, king by king, goes down.
'Tis you were chosen for this realm;
the whole world knows no other king.
The priests do all agree upon
this matter, whether old or young.
But we are servants, and constrained,
our will by pact and oath restrained.
With him who now sits on the throne,
our covenant now grips us strong,
To seek no other crowned head,
nor turn our faces from his gate.
Now we must have a proof that's firm
to free us from our oath and bond,
That we be not shamed in our faith,
nor break our pact, nor be disgraced.'
When King Bahram this answer heard
he gave the answer it deserved:
'Your plea is not allowed,' said he;
'wise men must shun disloyalty.
This rebel who your throne has seized,
your elder, is a child to me.
Though harming not a hair, the crown
from off his head I shall bring down,
Even though my rule does not depend
on caution or excuse. I am
The king, to Jamshid goes my line,
and in all ways heir to the realm.
Both crown and throne are tools; not rule,
which has no need of any tool.
He who is crowned and enthroned,
earth is his throne, Heaven his crown.
Faridun's crown and Jamshid's throne:
both vanished now; but he who owns
True substance raises high his head;
both crown and throne for his sake made.
I know the way to crown and throne;
with sword I'll make them both my own.
Although a traitor holds my place,
his spider's web spun over the cave,
A dragon to the cave door's come;
seeks audience with the spider. When
Was ant of Gabriel's kind, or gnat
the equal of the elephant's foot?
So bravely cries the onager
that it drowns out the lion's roan
The sun's light, when in Aries: can
it equalled be by hundred lamps?
I, suffering, among strangers live,
my own house in the hands of thieves;
My foe on honeyed sugar fares,
I on my heart and liver. Sword
And dagger set all pain at naught:
dagger in belly, sword at neck.
All Persia's realm my treasure, yet
my stable's 'mongst the Arabs set.
Now Munzir sends to me a feast;
now Nueman offers up his life.
The givers of my bread are kings,
but those who eat it full of sin.
I conquer realms like a young lion:
how can an old fox take my throne?
Royal am I; how shall my foe
take crown, or taxes to me due?
Kayanid scions deserve the throne;
it can't be held by some unknown.
We are the king, all others slaves;
me full of merit, empty they.
A king must raise an army; but
does one lone horseman raise much dust?
The wine, the Magian elder's labour,
should ought but his own offspring savour?
You know well that, in what I say,
I seek both right and truth; but by
Good covenant and pact, not through
rebellion and despotic rule.

I'll do as you see fit; 'tis best
to seek to satisfy your wish.
When you say there must be a proof
by which this pact may be dissolved,
This is the proof: the share will fall
to him who, 'twixt two lions, is bold.
Tomorrow, let their keeper bring,
starved of all food, two roaring lions,
Savage and fierce, with sharpest claws,
their fiery breath emitting smoke,
To the arena; let troops surround
the place, in ranks all gathered round.
Then lower down the royal crown;
set it between those two fierce lions.
Whoever seizes it shall be
worthy of crowning on that day.'
When he had spoken, courteous words,
pleasing, and deep in their import,
He sealed the letter with his seal
and thus conveyed his plan to all,
20.
How Bahram's Letter Reached Iran.
When the supporters of the king
his kindness saw, and heard those fine
And precious words, they went their way
homewards, his image in their eyes.
His kindness in each one inspired
devotion to his kingly farr.
They all averred, 'Bahram is king,
sovereign in nature and in name.
He cannot be opposed; how can
one hope with mud to hide the sun?
That warrior bold's a raging lion,
who dragons with an arrow hunts.
When the bold lion spreads his claws,
none can resist him. He will seize
The crown and throne by force, and bring
the mighty to their knees. Such flames,
Now quenched, should not be newly lit;
'tis best that we not test his heat.
This tale of lions, a crown that's seized:
of such a test he has no need;
But this condition is a proof
which tells the foxes from the wolves.'
They went to court, and told the king
the king's conditions; read to him
The letter and explained its words;
and added nought to what they'd heard.
The crown-worshipping old man put down
the crown, and sat below the throne.
'I'm weary of this throne and crown
for which I'll fall prey to a lion.
Better to live below the throne
than to be killed between two lions.
A clever man's not rash enough
to snatch food from a lion's mouth.
The kingdom's heir, by cup and sword,
is King Bahram, no other lord.
Give to the kingdom's heir the throne;
a young king's better than an old.
I've given up this job; I am
no king, but worship the true king.'
The nobles their reply adorned:
'O king of kings, of kings the crown,
We chose you as our ruler for
that very wisdom you now show.
Since by our order you did sit
upon the throne, now abdicate.
Now Bahram's made the lion a test,
'twere rashness if you should persist.
To seize the crown from them is no sport;
who knows what tricks the night brings forth.
In our own way we'll meet his terms:
tie up the lions, present the crown.
If he's afraid, the ivory throne
is yours; if he is killed, the crown.
But if he's skilled; seizes the crown,
exacts just taxes from the realm,
Then he deserves both throne and praise
(though difficult will be success).
In sum, we do conclude (though loath):
we may not violate our oath.
Tomorrow, when the day is born,
the king will hunt the fearsome lion.'
21.
How Bahram Seized the Crown from between Two Lions.
At daybreak, when the gold-crowned sun
raised golden footstool, ivory throne,
The officers and nobles, strong
in judgement and in mighty arm,
Arab and Persian, riding, came
towards those two ferocious lions.
The keeper let the lions loose
against their mark (man-eaters both);
Lion 'gainst lion was pitched in war;
they dug a grave for Bahram Gur.
A lion-keeper, courageous man!
then placed the crown between the lions.
Between black lions a golden crown;
like, in two dragons' jaws, the moon.
The moon escaped that cloud, shone forth,
as it was freed by Bahram's sword.
Those vicious lions lashed their tails
upon the ground, like dragons fell,
As if to say, 'Who'll seize this crown?
Who'll rob a dragon, or a lion?'

They knew nought of that fearless man
who hunted dragons and slew lions.
In range of those fierce lions, from fear,
no one would dare to venture near.
It was decided that Bahram,
lion-hearted, should first dare the lions.
If he should seize the crown, he'd own
crown, golden cup, and ivory throne;
If not, ill fortune would be blamed,
and he'd return to whence he came.
Bahram did not this compact broach,
but from the plain the lions approached.
There was no height in vale or plain
on which he had not lions slain.
But two-and-twenty, he had flayed
the manes from hundred lions' heads.
He who a hundred lions felled:
how could two lions his courage quell?
He fixed his belt around his waist,
and, like the south wind, swift made haste
Towards them; shouted at the lions,
and from between them stole the crown.
Like warriors stout they rushed at him,
with daggered claws and sword-like fangs,
To seize the crown-bearer's hand, and make
things strait for him who'd the throne take.
The king devised a way to tame
the beasts; the heads of both cast down,
Then rent their claws and tore their fangs,
and from them saved both head and crown.
Then, crowned, he mounted to the throne;
so Fortune aids the fortunate man.
He seized the crown from those two lions:
brought down the foxes from the throne.

22.

How Bahram Ascended the Throne in his Father's Place.

The ascendant of his throne and rule
auspicious showed, through his goodwill.
Before this deed, astrologers
had sought his fortune from the stars.
They'd seen the Lion on the throne;
a stable portent, likewise firm.
The sun at apogee, well met
with Mercury; while Venus sat
In Taurus, Jupiter in the Bow,
each house like Paradise. And lo,
The moon in tenth, in sixth house Mars,
feasting with sword and cup; the Scales
Were weighed (they said) by Saturn's hand;
their treasures reached from earth to Heaven.
When, with this happy portent, King
Bahram ascended to the throne,
From pearls and rubies scattered wide,
the ship of fortune overflowed.
Innumerable treasure-hoards
wealth upon wealth from tribute poured.
The former king, who'd first enjoyed
subjects' and warriors' loyalty,
Seeing the splendour of Bahram,
by which both crown and throne grew famed,
Of great and small, became the first
to call him king of Heaven and earth.
The priests called him king of the world;
the nobles termed him supreme lord.
Thus everyone, abroad, at home,
praised him according to his own
Degree. When Bahram rose so high,
his loftiness surpassed the sky.
He gave his speech of justice; strewed
bright pearls from rubies fresh. He said,
'God's given me the crown; and may
God's sacred gift rejoice in me.
Great praise and thanks to God I give;
may he who thanks his God be praised!
I shall not disregard His gifts,
but show my thanks; why not? To seize
The crown from two lions' jaws, this was
the work of God, not of the sword.
Since I've gained crown and lofty throne,
I'll act in ways that will please Him.
God willing, I shall do no harm,
in all my deeds, to anyone.
With me, O nobles of my court,
be straight and true, like my own course.
'Tis best from crooked ways you turn,
and rightness from right conduct learn.
If you grasp not right rule, your left
ear will be wearied by complaint.
I'll rest some days, then open wide
the door of equity and right.
My duty calls me to requite
ill deeds with ill, and right with right.
Till the blue sphere endures, may there
be blessings on the dead; but more
Than all things else, for live souls be
good tidings and security.
May I do naught but good and right;
who likes it not, let nought rejoice!'
When the king made his justice clear,
there bowed to him all who did hear.
A while he sat upon the throne,
and then retired to be alone.
He justice did, commanded right,
God and men pleased with him alike.
Sat with the noble and the great,
and trusted those who were upright.

23.
How King Bahram Gur Administered Justice in his Reign.
When by Bahram both crown and throne
were honoured, and with glory shone,
The seven-eyed belt he girded on
and sat upon the seven-stepped throne.
In Chinese silks as fine as skin,
and Rumi robes with gold adorned,
His beauty tribute took from Rum,
and nightly levied tax from Chin.
Like Jamshid's his four-cushioned throne;
his fanfare raised above the sun.
He fostered justice in the world,
and raised it high; supported those,
Throughout the world, who cherished right,
humbled those who abused their might.
The key that opened suffering's lock,
wherever he went he brought good luck.
He caused the world to prosper; freed
the air, that every soul might breathe.
The barren cow quickened and bore;
the water in the streams grew more;
Ripe fruits hung heavy on the trees;
new coins were minted with fresh dies.
Binding and loosing, he spread right
throughout the world. Division's blight
Forsook the realm. On every side
princes in his fair state took pride.
The kingdom's income, at his gate,
poured out in ever-increasing spate.
Proud seneschals gave up the keys
and treasures of their forts. Thus each
Man wrote anew his own life's page;
to the king's seal his soul did pledge.
In matters of the state, he gave
each honour fitting to his rank.
The poor man's state he ordered; and
brought back all those who'd fled the land.
He freed the sheep from the wolf's fang,
and made the falcon the dove's kin;
Cured mischief's head of drunkenness;
shortened the reach of grasping hands;
Destroyed the strength of all his foes,
his friends made lords of all the world.
In rule he practised manliness;
virtue will ever oppression best.
Chastising enemies, he ten
might kill, but would not one man wrong;
Better, at time of punishment,
to kill a man than him torment.
He saw this earthly camping place
brings nought but sorrow's dust. He kept
Himself content with love, maintained
his life with pleasure sweetly gained;
Knew worldly rule unstable; sought
in love's domain his firm support.
One day on state affairs he spent;
the other six on love was bent.
Who has no sign of loverhood?
He who loves not, is not alive.
His essence by love's die was stamped,
and lovers were his dearest friends.
His lofty business reached the sky;
the world 'neath his command did lie.
In pleasure he devoured the world;
did pleasure justice. Treasures flowed
Throughout his capital, gained by
his sword and whip, his conquest's prize.
But, though the realm through him grew green,
for he traversed it like the sun,
Men, proud of wealth and comfort, put
faith in a year which plenty brought.
They failed to thank God in their hearts,
divorced compassion from their breasts.
Whenever God's creatures fail to give
thanks for the bounties He provides,
That plenty will be turned to none,
their daily bread to iron and stone.
24.
About the Year of Famine and Bahram's Compassion.
One year the blades produced no grain,
and nowhere could it be obtained.
Dearth had so straitened food that men,
like beasts, ate grass; and everyone
Grew so distressed at that great dearth
that bread, though light, gained noble worth.
They brought the news to King Bahram:
'The world's by famine overrun.
Like wolves do men on others feed:
sometimes the quick, sometimes the dead.'
Seeing the price of grain had soared,
the king unlocked his royal stores.
To every town in which some grain
was stored, he issued his command:
That those in charge should meet before
the storehouse, and throw wide its doors;
Sell to the rich at market rate;
give freely to the destitute;
And any grain remaining should
be given the birds in time of need;
So that, in those times, none might die
from lack of food, What chivalry!
Everyone took whatever grain
the royal storehouses contained.
From foreign lands, time and again,
his camel caravans brought grain.

He spent great effort and much wealth,
striving to save the lives of all.
Thus four years without harvest passed;
men's daily bread came from his stores.
Such were his deeds when he attained
the throne; thus he true kingship gained.
His subjects' lives the king preserved,
save for one man who died from dearth.
At that man's death the king's heart grew
as strait and cold as ice; unto
His God he turned, and sought, in pain,
forgiveness for his shortcoming.
'O You Who grant all sustenance;
unequalled in Your providence;
By virtue of Your divine power,
You make much little, little more.
I cannot, though I labour long,
feed one gazelle that roams the plain.
You are He Who, triumphant, gives
to every man his daily bread.
If, out of dearth, one wretched man
perished, that was no crime of mine;
I had no knowledge that he lived;
what gain to me news of his death?'
When the king's plea to God was done,
a voice spoke to him from within:
'God, from your good intent, has given
a space of time out of your reign:
Since for four years, in wisdom, you've
one death from hunger not approved,
For four years more 'tis His command
that death be absent from your land.'
For four years in that realm, I heard
that, great or small, no person died.
Happy that king who, with kind gifts,
keeps from his subjects dreaded death.
All who were born, lived. Ever best
is income that's without expense.
With people filled, no mount or plain
without inhabitants remained.
From Isfahan to Rayy, I've heard,
house followed house, like jointed reeds.
From roof to roof, the blindest man
could pass from Rayy to Isfahan.
(If you think this unlikely, then
the fault's the author's, and not mine.)
Many were those who comforts found;
comforts more numerous than men.
When palm-branch joins to palm-branch, then
the crop of dates will pass all bounds.
Food becomes scarce when men are few;
more people can produce more food.
People, secure in plain and mount,
in pleasure sported, group by group.
For two long leagues there stretched a line
of fine musicians of all kinds;
A pool of wine near every stream,
a merry party in each lane.
Each man bought wine and sold his sword,
tore up his mail and sewed brocade.
All put their weapons by; forgot
the sword and arrow. He who'd got
The means for pleasure, took his joy
in merriment and luxury;
While he who lacked, the king commanded
that with his luck he be contented.
To each he gave some task to do,
and gave a share of pleasure too.
He ordered each day split in twain:
one half for work, one half for wine.
He cancelled taxes for six years,
uprooted seventy years of tears.
Six thousand masters of all arts,
puppeteers, dancers, minstrel bards,
He gathered in from everywhere,
and gave each district its fair share,
That everywhere that they might go
they'd entertain, be happy too.
Taurus, ascendant, paired his sway
with Venus, ruler of the age.
In such an age, when Venus reigns,
how should adversity obtain?
25.
The Story of Bahram and his Slave-Girl.
One day the king a hunt ordained
through hill and desert. Towards the plain
His swift-paced chestnut stallion flew;
he havoc wreaked, wild asses slew.
Jupiter's house is in the Bow:
his bow left Jupiter below.
His soldiers, ringed around the plain,
beat forth the game towards the king.
The king, lion-like, in centre stood;
the stallion danced beneath his lord.
His hand pearls from the bowstring flung:
the thumbstall emptied, arrows strung.
His bolts of tempered steel hurled down
now fire, now game, upon the ground.
With haunch of game, and purest wine,
it wants a fire to roast the chine.
Did then the royal spear strike fire
for this, while slaying onager?
His lance's heat, with grisly wound,
cooked well the prey he brought to ground,
While those that fled he swift pursued,
and living snared, or fiercely slew.

With him a moon-like maid did ride,
clever and quick, her lord beside.
Fitna her name, of thousand lures;
the king's temptress, he charmed by her.
Bright-faced like spring in Paradise;
quick as the wind over meadow's grass.
Like oil and honey mixed was she,
as sweet and smooth as paluda.
She played and sang with elegance,
and was quick-footed at the dance.
When to the lute she joined her song,
the birds from air to ground would throng.
Most often, at the hunt or feast,
the king her sweet songs would request.
The harp her weapon, the king's the bow:
she struck up tunes, he game laid low.
From the plain some wild asses neared;
the king his steed towards them spurred,
And, overtaking those swift beasts,
the raging lion his crossbow seized,
An arrow in the thumbstall placed,
then drew the bow and loosed his grasp.
It struck the onager's broad haunch,
and his prey did obeisance.
Thus in a moment, of that prey
so wondrous, he would seize or slay;
But that slave-girl, from wilful whim,
restrained herself from praising him.
The king stood patiently a while,
until a wild ass came in view.
'Say then: do not those narrow eyes
know how such skills as mine to prize?
Yet how should such abundant prey
be compassed by such narrow sight?
This new beast: tell me, how shall I
attack it? where my arrow try?'
The sweet-lipped maid, as was her wont,
a woman she, and idle-tongued,
Said, 'If you'd kindle praise, then join
its hoof to head, with arrow bound.'
When the king heard her twisting words,
for her ill will he sought a cure.
His sling so swift he first took up,
and nocked a ball within its cup.
Quick to the quarry's ear, the ball
sped sure, and set its brain aboil.
The wretched beast drew hoof to ear
the offending ball therefrom to clear.
Like lightning flashed the royal bolt:
stitched hoof to head at but one stroke.
The king then asked the maid of Chin,
'What think you of the feat you've seen?'
She said, 'The prince is quite well versed
in this; what's hard that's oft rehearsed?
Whatever a man's by teaching trained
to do, though hard, is always gained.
Your royal bolt the hoof transfixed
through practice, not by strength unmixed.'
These words the king's wrath did incite;
the tall tree felt the axe's bite.
He felt no pity for that moon;
his rage was clear in every limb.
When bent on vengeance, kings should wait:
slay only when in better state.
'Gainst young gazelles one does not ride,
nor make a fur coat from dogs' hide.
'Leave her (he thought) and she'll make trouble;
but kill her, that's dishonour double!
For lion-brave warriors do not slay
weak women; they're unequal prey.'
An officer of noble line,
fearsome as wolf and bold as lion,
He summoned secretly, and said,
'Go you, and rid me of this maid.
She has disturbed our stately court:
death to disturbers reason supports.'
The honest warrior swift removed
that fairy-face to his abode.
He sought to do the king's command:
to snuff her like a candle's flame.
With brimming eyes the beauty cried,
'Do not condone this evil deed;
And, if you love yourself, do not
take on your head my guiltless blood.
I am the privileged consort of
the king, his choice all else above;
His sole companion at the chase
and feast am I; none takes my place.
If my unbridled tongue made me
sport for some demon, so it be:
In heat the king my death decreed;
so slay me not with undue speed.
For several days your hand restrain;
then tell the king that I am slain.
If at that news the king is pleased,
slay me; of guilt you are released.
But if my death doth make him grieve,
in soul and body both you're safe:
You freed from vengeance, I from death;
this cypress will not fall to earth.
A day will come when, though I'm nought,
your service to me I'll requite.'
She spoke, and then her chain unclasped;
laid seven rubies in his grasp,
Each worth a kingdom's ransom; twice
the value of all Oman's price.

The officer, at these honest words,
forbore to shed that idol's blood.
'Beware,' he said, 'and shun repose;
to no one this affair disclose,
But say, "I am a servant in
this house," and your work so ordain.
I to the plans that must be wrought
will turn, if time give us respite.'
They swore a binding oath; thus one
escaped wrongdoing, the other harm.
When, in a week, he waited on
the king, who asked him of that moon,
'The Moon to Dragon I've given', he said,
'and slain; with tears her blood wit paid.'
To the king's eyes sharp tears did start;
the man grew easy in his heart.
The officer owned fertile lands,
estates far from the eyes of men;
A palace there rose towards the sky,
beaten by waves from Heaven's sea.
A tower sixty steps in height
was crowned by a fair place to sit;
That maiden too did dwell therein;
to precious ones high place is given.
Meanwhile, one day a cow brought forth
a comely calf. Each day thenceforth
That lovely world-illuming maid
the calf across her shoulders laid,
And standing firm beneath him, bore
him daily up the lofty tower,
The Sun does bear the Calf in spring;
who's seen a moon do such a thing?
That silver-limbed gazelle would bear
daily that calf from house to tower.
Day after day she did not quit
this practice, but continued it,
Until, the calf an ox become
of six years' age, her task was done:
That rose-limbed idol still could bear
the ox from palace grounds to tower.
Its burden troubled her no whit,
for she had grown quite used to it;
And as the ox increased in weight
her own strength ever grew more great.
One day that maiden, sore at heart,
with her protector sat apart;
From her bejeweled ears four gems
that houri loosed, then said to him,
'Go, take and sell these precious things,
and quietly the money bring:
Buy sheep and incense, attar rare,
and candles, fruits and wine prepare;
Array a Paradisal feast,
with incense, wine, sweet fruits, and meat.
When the king to the hunt shall ride,
like victory, do not leave his side,
But to his service dedicate
yourself; his reins a moment take.
King Bahram is by nature kind;
of gentle habit, noble mind;
And when he your entreaty hears,
he'll seek to raise you over your peers.
Upon this star-girt prospect, we
will milk and honey to him feed;
And if this deed will bring us gain,
we both will high degree attain.'
The officer the gems disdained,
for on him God had treasures rained.
He went, and from his secret treasure,
prepared a feast for Bahram's pleasure:
The finest foods fit for a king:
fish and fowl, mutton and lamb;
Wine and sweet basil for the feast,
and victuals for a banquet meet.
He readied all against the time
Bahram should choose to hunt again.
26.
How Bahram Came from the Hunting-Ground to Feast with the Officer.
One day the king rose from his throne
and made towards the hunting-ground.
Before the king could hunt or slay,
his victim made the king her prey.
When he passed through that village where
the officer had his lofty tower,
He saw a splendid pleasure-ground,
all green on green, and shaded round.
'Whose are these lands,' he asked, 'and where
the owner of this village fair?'
The officer, who rode beside
the king, and heard, humbly replied.
He kissed the ground, and homage made:
'O gentle king, your humble slave,
Owns this fair village by your gift;
of your rich wine the merest drop.
And if the king will will it so,
and honour to his servant show,
Without constraint, as is his wont,
and as his judgement wise may prompt,
Let him go in this narrow gate,
and raise his slave to lofty state.
The king's largesse to me has given
a tower that rises to the moon,
By gardens girdled, served by Heaven,
Eden its pupil. If the king deign
To drink, atop it, the stars will bow
before its gate; his dust will fill

The house with scent; my flies will make
sweet honey, and my bulls give milk.'
When the king heard these honest words,
this noble speech: 'Command is yours,'
He said; 'then go now and prepare,
until I from the hunt repair.'
The officer bowed low; made haste
to cleanse that mirror of its rust;
With Paradisal carpets decked
the prospect, and fine ornaments.
When the king came from the hunting-ground,
his royal eagle reached the moon.
His host the finest folded stuffs,
of Chinese make and Grecian weave,
Carpet on carpet, rare and fine,
whose brilliance cheered the heart and mind,
Cast 'neath the king's swift Turkish steed,
and scattered pearls before his feet.
Mounting the sixty steps, the king
found there a vault lofty as Heaven,
As fair as Khavarnaq in form;
its carpet was the azure dome.
The host brought all that was required:
incense, rose-water, drink, and food.
When the king finished this repast,
he called for wine, made joyful feast.
When he had drunk a glass or three
sweat dewed his rosy face. Said he,
'Host of this golden palace, your place
is pleasant, your provisions great;
But these high sixty steps of yours,
which the sky grasps within its noose:
Your age is sixty years or so;
how can you climb them? Tell me now.'
His host said, 'May the king live long,
his saqis angels, Kawsar his wine;
'Tis not amazing; I'm a man;
how could I fail these steps to climb?
The wonder is, a maid, moon-fair,
supple and soft, like silks and furs,
Carries upon her back an ox,
that's like a mountain, here to graze.
She climbs these sixty steps at once,
quickly, nor stops at any one.
An ox? what ox! more elephant,
that cannot bear its own great weight.
By God! no man in all this land
could ever raise it from the ground.
But when a woman brings it here,
up sixty steps, is this not rare?'
When this was told, the king, amazed,
did bite his fingers in surprise.
He said, 'How can such a thing be?
It can't; or else, it's sorcery.
I won't believe what you have said,
till my own eyes have seen this feat.'
He then requested that his host
should prove his claim. On hearing this,
His host descended, there to tell
the ox-bearing maid the lion's tale.
The silver-limbed one had foreseen
this time, before she made her plans.
She donned Chinese adornments; gave
to rose narcissus' langourous gaze;
Strewed musky curls over the moon;
taught loving glances magic's charms
With eyes made dark with kohl. Deceit
disguised reproach with manner sweet.
Tulip-like cheeks her cypress dyed
a rosy hue; below, a reed.
She decked with pearls her cypress form;
bound Pleiads' necklace to the moon.
Rubies her lips, rare pearls her teeth;
her chin a lover's apple cleft.
Her curls, a crown of amber, swept
from head to ears, and graced her neck.
(A king whose throne's of ivory formed
cannot dispense with crown and throne.)
Her Hindu mole and Ethiop curls
were ranged as if prepared for war.
Her jet-black mole on ruby lips
an Ethiop's seal on fresh dates set.
Her wimple's glittering seed-pearls bound
a veil of stars around the moon.
The beauty of her jewel-hung ears
kindled both ardour and desire.
She bound her moon in a veil of white,
like a Syrian rose amid jasmine bright.
This fortnight's moon, when, by love led,
her seven adornments had arrayed,
Like a full moon drew near the ox:
the Moon finds strength in Taurus' house.
She bent her head and raised the ox:
see what a jewel adorned that beast!
Step by step she sped to the roof,
drew near the foot of Bahram's couch.
Bearing the ox, she stood erect;
seeing the Bull, the Lion leapt up.
He stood amazed: what might this mean?
some gain?, yet he knew not What gain.
The Moon set down the ox, and said
unto the Lion, with toss of head:
'This gift of mine, which I alone
present you, by my strength was done.
Who in the world, through power or plan,
could bear it from this tower again?'

The king replied, 'This is no power;
you've practised this feat long before,
And, year on year and bit by bit,
through constant striving, mastered it:
Till now, without apparent stress,
you balance in your scales this beast.'
The beauty, silver-limbed, bowed low,
with salutations as were due,
And said, 'The king a great debt owes:
"practice" the ox, not the wild ass?
Am I, who to the roof have borne
an ox, for "practice" to be known?
Why, when you shoot a wild ass small
should no one your deed "practice" call?'
At her reproach, he knew the maid,
his Turk, and humbly to her sped;
Raised the moon's veil, and, seeing her,
upon that moon rained pearl-like tears;
Embraced her, begged her pardon; she
poured rose-water from narcissus eyes.
He cleared the house of bad and good;
spoke sweetly to that lovely maid.
'If in this house you've been in prison,
a thousand times I beg your pardon.
If I, headstrong, kindled a fire,
'twas I was burned; you have survived.'
When from disturbers the place was free,
he made 'Disturbance' seated be.
Fitna sat down, her speech began:
'O king, who sets disturbance down,
Whose separation caused my death,
whose love has brought me back to life.
This sorrow that has made me waste
away, would mountains turn to dust.
My loving nature nearly caused
my life to end; and all for love.
When the king, hunting onager,
with arrow joined hard hoof to ear,
At such a loosing of his bow
not earth, but sky as well, bowed low.
I, who was slow to praise, thereby
did keep from him the Evil Eye;
For what man's eye has worthy found,
the harmful Eye is sure to wound.
To the Sky-Dragon, who falsely showed
my love as hate, my crime is owed.'
These words so moved the king, they pierced
his soul as they shot through his heart.
'Indeed, you speak the truth,' said he,
'and much does prove your loyalty:
A love so great when all began,
such fine excuses at the end.
Praised be that pearl a thousandfold
whose nature doth such merit hold!
This pearl were shattered by a stone,
had it not been for that brave one
Who guarded it.' He summoned then
the officer, and gladdened him,
Embraced him, splendid gifts bestowed:
a thousand pearls for that one owed
Exchanged; and gave him the control
of Rayy, with other gifts as well.
Joyful, he headed for the town,
and scattered sugar at his own
Great wedding feast. He summoned priests,
and made that moon his lawful wife.
He lived with her in love and ease,
until a long, long time had passed.

27.

The Invasion of the Khaqan of Chin and Bahram's Victory.

When Bahram's fame had risen high,
from Fish to Moon, for kingship wise,
The hearts of noble men grew strong;
through him their fame new life put on.
The evil in dark corners died,
and perished, drowned by death's black flood.
There was a sage, Narsi by name
(King Bahram's brother bore the same),
In judgement strong, whose reason kenned
the ins and outs of everything;
Descended from Darius, great king
(a fact not hidden, but well known).
Alike a minister and friend,
the king was never far from him.
He had three sons, each one of them
a world of virtue on his own.
The oldest of them, Zaravand
(so was he by his father named),
The king a hundredfold increased
in worth, and made him his chief priest.
He bore the goal in mind, and knew
the way; his faith was boundless, too.
The second taxes oversaw,
collected imposts on the roads.
His just decisions caused the king
to give him charge over all the land.
Most trusted member of the court,
The third controlled both town and troops.
The king left them to do their work,
and they were loyal to their tasks.
They worked each day; while he made bright
with flowing wine the feast each night,
And, like a mill which takes and grinds,
dispensed the wealth that came to him.
Throughout the world this news grew known,
and cutting blades were sharply honed.

All said, 'Bahram doth drunken sup;
trades faith for wealth, and sword for cup.
He drinks unceasing with his friends,
consumes but wine, and reaps the wind.'
Each one was filled with high desire,
and to the kingdom did aspire.
The Khan of Khans marched out from Chin
to seize the world-ruler's domain;
Like fearsome dragons, in his train
three hundred thousand archers strong.
They seized by force the ruler's lands
held in Transoxiana; then,
The Oxus crossed, they hurried on,
and havoc raised in Khurasan.
Bahram learned of that Turkish raid;
his army's state left him dismayed.
He saw that all, on pleasure fed,
the ways of war had laid aside.
Their leaders too, he found, had slight
devotion to maintain his rights.
Each one by hidden routes had sent
a spy to seek out the Khaqan;
They bore ill-feeling towards the king,
and sought to save their wealth and lands.
'We're your well-wishing slaves,' they said;
'advance: we're dust upon your road.
Advance with pride; you rule the world;
Bahram's incapable of rule.
'Gainst him we'll draw the sword, should you
so wish; or give him up to you
In chains.' A lettered spy did bring
this dire some news unto the king.
He lost hope in Iran; bequeathed
his kingdom to his deputies;
Concealed himself; one cannot wage
a war with weapons such as these.
The news spread far and wide: 'The king
has hid himself from troops and realm;
Has fled, not man enough to face
the Khaqan and his troops, disgraced.'
When the good news reached the Khaqan:
'The king has from his throne come down;
Your fortune royal belt and crown;
advance, and take both crown and throne.'
And when the Khan of Khans had heard:
'Bahram has vanished from the world,
Has left off sword and sword-play both,
and sits to drink in leisured sloth,
Recks not the foe, and drinks his wine,
and does that which should not be done,'
What in his foe he'd not approved
he did; that foe to laughter moved.
Bahram went hunting every day;
his messengers sped every way.
News of the Chinese chief he sought;
his courier brought a true report:
'He thinks him safe, of easy mind.'
The king was pleased at this good sign.
From all his army mustered were
three hundred horsemen; nothing more.
All warriors skilled in warfare they,
dragons on land and sharks at sea.
Like the pomegranate (its hundred seeds
all in one house), of single heart.
The king then played a crooked game;
juggled with balls, but hid his own.
His foe sought fire; he gave him smoke,
and so deceived him with false hope.
He loosed his arrow towards that mark,
for he knew well his foe's mistake.
He launched a night attack; the sphere
his armies' dust made dark and drear.
In the deep blackness of a night
which, like a snake, devoured light;
A night which quenched all lamps; when plain
and hill were blacker than crow's wing;
As if a drunken Zangi horde
ran to and fro with brandished sword;
And men in fear of that black foe
opened their eyes, and nothing saw;
And the bright sphere, in blackest silks,
was like a wine-jar smeared with pitch:
On such a night of amber pure,
Bahram waged his Bahramian war.
He rushed upon the Chinese horde,
now with his spear, and now with sword.
Wherever he aimed his arrow, true
it sped, and pierced its target through.
His granite-piercing arrows put
his enemies' watchful eyes to sleep.
They saw the wound, no arrow found;
they arrows saw, but never a wound.
'What trick is this', they asked, 'to find
wound without shaft, shaft without wound?'
Till, out of dread, no one would come
a league's length from that battleground.
He, like a cloud, rushed here and yon,
from plain to hill, from hill to plain;
So many with his shafts did slay,
that earth from blood became as clay.
Life fled, in unbecoming haste,
each body that his arrow pierced.
When morning drew the sun's bright sword,
the sphere disclosed a bowl of blood.
How should the sword lack bowl and blood?
With sword and basin, blood abounds.

From all that blood, red rivers flowed,
and bore off heads like polo balls.
So many limbs sharp blades had hewed,
that men, from fear, bile's poison spewed.
Sharp lance had pledged to sword its tongue
to smite the dragons: bring them on!
Like leaping snakes the arrow shafts;
there's danger in the snake that leaps.
King Bahram held the centre; loosed
his slender arrows. If he smote
With blade a warrior's crown, he'd split
him like a melon to the waist;
Or, threatening with a sideways blow,
he'd cleave him at the waist in two.
With such a sword and shaft, 'twas right
that the foe fear his dreadful might.
The Turks, at his swift Turk-like raid,
and those grave wounds left in his wake,
All for swift flight good reasons found:
their swords grown dull, their running honed.
When the king's iron strove so well,
the Turkish horde, in chaos, fell.
The king saw victory's rising star;
he loosed his shafts and cast his spears.
With mighty blows he scattered them
as clouds before the wind are driven.
Victorious, he called his men:
'Behold our luck! our providence!
Strive yet again to strike off heads,
and tear the centre from its place.'
As one they launched a strong attack,
with lion-like mounts, and dragon blades.
The right retreated, the left fled;
the centre towards the vanguard poured.
The king held victory in his grasp;
vanquished the centre and its chiefs.
A troop more numerous than the sands
had been destroyed at Bahram's hands.
The mighty claws of his black lions
pounded the feeble swordsmen's brains.
Arrows, like Zahhak's serpents, struck
bold warriors to the ground. The dust
Of Turkish armies, as they fled
the sharp blades, reached the Oxus' edge.
The king took jewels and treasures fine,
beyond the treasurer's reckoning.
When he victorious returned,
then to his subjects' care he turned.
He sat in triumph on the throne;
renewed the New Year's feast; to him
All bowed in salutation; then
great praises of that victory sang.
The minstrels, versed in Persian song,
sang heroes' tales to the harp's strains;
The Arab bards sang poems that shone
like lustrous pearls, to rebec's tones.
The well-versed king their verse assayed;
gave them more wealth than could be weighed.
Skirtfuls of pearls, hatfuls of gold
over the fire-temple's priests he poured.
So much largesse did he bestow
that no one living remained poor.
28.
How Bahram Rebuked his Generals.
One day, with smiling fortune crowned,
King Bahram Gur sat on his throne.
Princes and kings from everywhere,
who gave men crowns, or crowns did wear,
All, at the foot of Bahram's throne,
were ranged like stars before the moon.
The king unsheathed his tongue's sharp blade:
'O generals bold, and leaders brave:
Both peace and war need armies; man
would otherwise be like a stone.
But which of you, in any fray,
has shown his manly bravery?
My chosen warriors of this age:
what battles have I seen you wage?
Who among you such deeds has shown
as from the brave and bold should come?
What harm did fall on any foe
from your swords' points, in time of woe?
Which of you have I seen advance
to quell a foe, conquer a land?
Boasts one, "I'm of Iraj's line;"
one, "Arash's skill is nought to mine."
One speaks of Giv, one of Rustam;
others from lions take their name.
But when the time to act had come,
not one did battle; every one
Preferred to secret sessions creep,
and say, "Alas! our king's asleep;
Heedless of all, he quaffs his wine;
no one can stomach such a king."
Though I drink wine, 'tis not so great
that I lack care for the world's state.
Though I may drink a pool of wine,
my sword's not far from bloody streams.
Like lightning when the cloud pours rain,
one hand grasps sword, the other wine.
I drink wine, and the feast adorn,
yet still the sword's work never scorn.
My hare's sleep is a secret ploy;
though sleeping, I yet see the foe.
My laughter and my drunkenness
are lion's grin and elephant's must.

The grinning lion sheds blood; who'd not
flee from the drunken elephant?
Only fools drink and lose their wits;
quite otherwise are those with sense.
Whoever does not lack for wit
drinks wine, but is not drunk from it.
When I determine to drink wine,
I tread upon great Qgysar's crown.
When I am keen for wine, I pour
its dregs upon my lowly foes.
What then do my supporters think?
That Heaven's stars but idly blink?
Though I may sleep, my luck's awake;
I drink, but it's about its work.
With such a drunken sleep, see how
I've spoiled the Khaqan's rest; in so
Pursuing error, how I've borne
away the Hindu robber's things.
He is a dog who, weak and frail,
does not, to guard his trust, sleep well.
Though dragons in their caves may snore,
the lion won't enter through the door.'
When the king's tale was fully said,
the nobles' faces blushed as red
As roses; bowing low in awe,
they gave their feeble, weak reply:
'The king's fair words unto his slaves
are an adornment to the wise.
We've made of them a talisman
for soul and body; service's ring.
'Tis God Who crowned the king; all men
contrive is nought but empty wind.
Those princes proud who with you vied
in vain to equal you did strive;
But none was equal to you, none
became the head; all were cast down.
We slaves have seen the king perform
deeds none has ever seen: he's bound
The demon, burned the dragon, killed
the elephant, the rhino felled;
Let alone lions (common game);
all birds and beasts his arrows claim.
Who else but he can hunting ride,
and twist wild asses' necks aside?
Now aims he at the leopard's spots;
now draws teeth from the mouths of sharks.
Now furrows India's brow; now smites
the Chinese foe in Indian night.
Now takes his tribute from Faghfur;
now gathers taxes from Qgysar.
Though many men have lions smote,
and strained their brains out through their mouths,
That lion-man he who, with three hundred
men, has three hundred thousand bested.
Of former kings the tale is told
who were in love and warfare bold:
If any of them fame did win,
'twas with great armies, over time;
No one could do what he has done
in battle with but some few men.
When kings are reckoned up, 'tis he
who'll as a thousand counted be.
Each has his sign; but he alone
the whole world holds. When he brings down
His sword on any head, it splits
like two halves of a dome; and if
His arrow towards the hard rock flies,
like pebbles, stone in pieces lies.
His lance, like snake-stone, heals; he takes,
with dragon steed, the venomed snake.
All his opponents, candle-like,
are melted down by fiery fate.
Each head which rises 'gainst his sword
is tainted by the scent of blood.
His drunkenness a sign of sense;
his sleep no sleep, but vigilance.
And when to wine he turns his thoughts,
he drinks; but 'tis his foes who're drunk.
Most learned of all men, he holds
most perfect power over good and ill;
The most sagacious of the age,
who needs not any other sage.
As long as earth 'neath Heaven lie,
may he reign over the lofty sky,
The earth in his protecting shade,
the heavens beneath his throne arrayed.'
When those wise men had said these words,
next to his rubies strung jet beads,
King Nueman rose up from their midst,
and with his praise adorned the feast.
'Wherever goes the monarch's throne,
be it the Fish, it scrapes the moon.
What man is able to confirm
or doubt the justice of his claim?
God on your head has placed the crown;
may ever verdant be your throne.
We, servants of your court, are raised
to eminence by your crown's shade.
All that we have is by your grace;
you govern all that we possess.
Arabs and Persians, all your slaves,
at your command our heads we'd give.
For long, with all my skills, I've served
the king. Since in his court I've earned
Great rank and station; in his sway
have found provision for my way,

If he'll consent and give me leave,
I will go home, to take my ease
And rest a little from my pains,
and then, should he command, return;
If not, so long as I shall live,
full loyally his throne I'll serve.'
The king then gave the order that
the treasurer for him weigh out
Jewels and wealth; bring royal gifts:
Egyptian, Moorish, Omani work.
The porters then grew busy; poured,
load upon load, a treasure hoard:
Musk-sacs in bushels, loads of gold,
and troops of slaves, both youths and girls;
Elegant stuffs for precious robes,
many more times than can be told;
Fine Arab horses, Persian-bred,
who deep seas swam and mountains trod;
Davidian mail and Indian swords;
his largesse launched a second Ark.
Rubies and pearls whose worth was more
than sellers of pearls and rubies know;
A jewelled crown from his head; a robe
worth more than Shushtar's income. So
He gave, till Nueman beamed; and then
gave lands from Aden to Yemen.
With bounty from the court, Nueman
withdrew, like Venus from the moon.
The king, grown tired from bitter fight,
bent him towards joy and love's delight.
He ordered everyone's affairs;
then to his own he made repair.

29.

How Bahram Sought the Princesses of the Seven Climes.

He sat to pleasure, eased in mind;
his foes subdued, took up the wine.
He then recalled that master who
limned that description, and that room
In which the seven portraits hung;
the Artang of the Seven Climes.
Love for those houri maids had cast
the seeds of love into his heart.
His furnace ceased its boilings seven
when those elixirs came to hand.
The first maid, of Kayanid stock
(whose father was no more), he sought
With countless gifts of greatest price,
and gained a pearl of his own race.
To the Khaqan his envoy sped,
and, mixing love with threats, conveyed
His wish: for daughter, treasure, crown,
and seven years' tribute. The Khaqan
Gave to him tribute, daughter, and
a load of gold, a hoard of gems.
Then, Turkish-wise, he raided Rum,
and kindled fire throughout the land.
Fearful, the Qgysar tarried not:
his daughter gave, and pardon sought.
Then to the Maghreb's king he sent,
with Barbary gold, and crown, and throne,
And gained his daughter too; just see
what cleverness the king displayed!
When from that garden he obtained
that cypress, to India he went;
With reasoned words he sought and gained
the princess; his desire attained.
His envoy from Khwarazm did seek
a beauty worthy of a feast;
He wrote to Siqlab, seeking then
a beauty bright as water. When
He'd from the Seven Climes' rulers gained
those pearl-like beauties, then he turned
From worldly things, and pleasure sought;
did justice to good life and youth.

30.

How Bahram Feasted in Winter;
The Building of the Seven Domes.

One day, with victory's light aglow,
the sky unveiled its radiant brow,
Auspicious, brilliant, happy day!
for long may it remembered be!
With sages learned and wise, the king
arrayed a beauteous gathering.
The first of winter, 'twas a day
for house, not for the garden's play.
The garden's blooming torches out;
the gardeners' things all gathered up;
The crows had robbed the nightingales
of song. 'Stop thief!' Their cries assailed
The garden. Crows black as Hindus be;
no wonder there, like Hindus, thieves.
The morning wind, a painter, limned
upon the water, chain-like rings.
The burning cold outshone the fire,
made water swords, the sun's blades water.
The snowstorm's lustrous file pierced eyes,
and froze the springs to bitter ice.
Fermented milk became like cheese;
the blood within the veins did freeze.
The hills wore ermine, earth did wear
white robes; the sphere donned miniver.
Predators ambushed kine; tore off
their skins to make themselves warm robes.
Plants huddled 'neath the earth; and all
that grew, withdrew. The bi-coloured world,
By alchemy, had hid within

the hearts of stones, fire's ruby flame.
Wise roses in the furnace hid,
crucible-clay above their heads.
Mercurial drops in streams had turned,
layer on layer, to silver pure.
The winter chamber of the king
the four seasons' nature still maintained.
The scents of many rare perfumes
made temperate the snowy wind.
Like elixir, its fruits and wines
wakened the heart, and lulled the mind.
Sandal and aloes fed the fire,
smoke-girt, like Hindus at their prayer:
A fire which supported pleasure;
a mine of red Magian sulphur.
It seemed like blood that boiling had
congealed; or like silk steeped in blood.
Its jujubes were a nutty colour,
its mercury braised cinnabar.
A hollowed apple, rosy red,
all stuffed with pomegranate seeds.
A rebel wakened from his sleep
and, washing, in red grape juice dipped.
Like ambergris that's dyed with pitch;
a brilliant sun all veiled in musk;
Darkness caught in light's throat; or else
a tulip sprung from houris' locks.
A fair Turk from Greek stock it seemed;
'The Joy of Hindus' was its name.
The torch of Jonah, Moses' lamp,
the feast of Jesus, Abraham's
Rose garden. Round it coals, like musk,
seemed like a shining mirror's rust.
One agate, one cornelian; like
a mine of rubies in the dark.
Upon its gems the eyes did feed:
like jacinth, yellow, blue, and red.
A blooming bride with sparks adorned,
embracing coal, amber-perfumed.
Gilt bridal tent and banquet hall:
one grenadine, one gold sandal.
Its yellow flame within the smoke
was golden treasure 'neath black snake.
Famed as both Hell and Paradise:
a Hell of heat, a Heaven of light.
A Hell for unbelievers; Heaven
to those who're to that Garden bound.
Hymned by Magian Zand; its priests,
like moths, had pledged their robes to it.
It made the frozen ice perspire:
alas! why should it be called Fire?
Above the fire, familiar friends,
doves danced, grey feathers poured on flames.
Around that silk-hung banquet house
flew plump, ringed francolin and grouse.
The room more green than cypress shade;
the wine more red than pheasant's blood.
The dove-grey sky rained from above
its plump ring-doves, from them their blood:
In the crystal cups that wine was poured;
say, frozen water with wet fire.
Beauties with wild-ass eyes drank there,
and roasted joints of onager.
With his companions, King Bahram
in regal fashion drank his wine.
Wine, sweetmeats, music, company,
good friends, and confidants had he.
The rosy wine was cooked, all smiles,
by living fire, like rose pastilles,
Sweet music made the brain grow warm,
and hearts grew soft as wax therefrom.
Each worthy, from his store of wit,
said something to his status fit,
When words had followed words, speech passed
to one most eloquent: 'These heights',
He said, 'to which the king has soared;
this just rule over which he's lord,
No one has known, not hid nor plain,
in all the world, from any king.
Thanks to his blessed farr, we owe
all to his most auspicious rule:
Security there is, and health;
both straitened enemies and wealth.
Health, safety, and sufficiency:
these true wealth, all else vanity:
With body clothed and belly full,
what need for rubies or for pearls?
We, who have one like you as king,
in having you have everything.
Would that, with this, there were a way
to hide you from the Evil Eye:
That moving stars and turning sphere
might gaze on this good fortune here;
That joy's auspicious star not stray;
such pleasure not be swept away;
That the king might rejoice forever,
and wind not steal his store of pleasure.
The king should lead a happy life;
so be it, though we be sacrificed.'
When he had done, all there were stirred,
and gave their hearts unto his words,
Which drove away the icy storm,
and were approved by everyone.
There was with them a man of worth,
freeborn, upright, of noble birth,
Named Shida, brilliant as the sun,

who all things, black or white, adorned.
A master of design was he,
surveyor famed. Geometry,
Physics, astronomy: all these
were like wax in his hands. And he
A master-builder was as well,
and painted images with skill;
His brush and chisel, used with art,
stole Mani's soul and Farhad's heart
Away. Reason's apprentice he;
Simnar had his first master been.
In Khavarnaq, at that rare task,
he'd helped his master. When he saw
The king, rejoicing, in that feast,
fluent of tongue, fire in his breast,
He kissed the ground and praised the king;
His homage done, he sat again,
And said, 'If the king give me leave,
I'll keep the Evil Eye away.
For I can weigh the sky, and know
the stars; my wit their work does show.
In painting, building, you would say
God's art inspires me. I will make
A likeness of the heavenly sphere,
that it not bring him harm; and nor,
While he dwells in earth's picture-house,
need he have fear of Heaven's stars.
He'll dwell protected all his life;
on earth he'll govern like the sky.
To do this, I will build for him,
like seven strong forts, seven fair domes,
Each of a different hue, and all
than hundred fanes more beautiful.
The king has seven idols fair;
each one a country's banner bears.
Each clime is firmly governed by
its sister planet. Every day
Within the week, as all know well,
is by one planet clearly ruled.
On such auspicious feast-days, let
him in a dome his pleasure seek;
Don robes of that dome's hue; drink wine
with the fair bride who dwells within.
If with my words the king complies,
he'll raise himself above the skies.
As long as life endures, he'll gain
enjoyment of his life.' The king
Replied to him: 'Were I to build
an iron-gated house of gold;
Yet, in the end, since all must die,
why go to all this trouble? Why
Build me these domes as you advise;
adorn a palace in such wise?
These are but castles of vain pleasure;
where is the house of the Creator?
Though I may praise them all, where should
I seek their Maker?' Then he said,
'I've erred in this; why should I speak?
The place of the Creator seek?
He, Whom in no place can we see,
in every place can worshipped be.'
He said these words, and then fell still,
his brain from this desire aboil.
For in Simnar's design he'd seen
that which the seven brides explained.
And now those fairy-forms he held,
as, in his casket, priceless pearls.
These words had deeply moved the king;
he saw therein a secret scheme.
To answer them he did not haste,
but held his peace for several days.
When some days passed after these words,
he summoned Shida to his court.
He bade him do as he'd proposed;
all necessary things disposed:
Prepared a treasure, readied goods,
that he might labour if he would.
Then for that work, upon a day
by Bahram's aspect graced, Shida,
Who knew the stars' connections, bent
his mind to choose a fair portent;
On an ascendant fortunate
the palace's foundations laid;
In two years such an Eden wrought
that men from Eden knew it not.
When the dome-builder with such skill
those precious Seven Domes had built,
The nature, ruling star, of each
was as Shida had first decreed.
The king observed the seven spheres
joined hand in hand in love, and heard
How all men spoke, both near and far,
of Nueman's dealings with Simnar;
How all wise men expressed their blame
that he that wondrous man had slain.
That Shida might rejoice, he gave
all Amul to him; then he said,
'If Nueman sinned when he did wreak
injustice on a friend, I seek,
Through justice, pardon; though my deed's
not generous, nor was his, greed.
So does the turning world ordain:
to one man loss, another gain.
One burns with thirst; another drowns
in water. Thus the world confounds
All men in their affairs; and they

no remedy but silence see.'
31.
Description of the Seven Domes;
How Bahram Took his Pleasure therein.
When Bahram raised Kayqubad's crown,
and Kaykhusraw's, up to the moon,
In that realm he a palace built
that put to flight all Farhad's skill;
In that seven-columned Bisitun
against the sky raised seven domes;
In those sky-joining ramparts reared
a rampart 'gainst the lofty sphere.
Within that fort, the Seven Domes
the seven planets' natures owned.
The hue of each the star-knower weighed,
against each planet's cast assayed.
The dome of Saturn, as was fit,
was veiled in musky black; while that
Of Jupiter, just as it should,
received the hue of sandalwood.
The one that Mars encompassed clasped
red as its emblem; as for that
The Sun informed, bright bands of gold
made its hue yellow. That which hoped
For Venus-like adornment blazed
as bright and white as Venus' face.
That one sustained by Mercury
was turquoise-hued, like victory;
While that towards whose tower the Moon
went forth, was clad in verdant green,
Like Bahram's fortune. Thus were raised
those domes whose forms the planets gave.
The Seven Climes to them were tied,
the seven princesses their brides.
Each one, in colour and in mode,
had made one dome her own abode,
And everything within it made
the selfsame hue the dome displayed.
The happy king, day after day,
in one fair palace held his sway:
Saturday when that day's lot fell,
the others as was right and well.
When his wise judgement so ordained
that he should feast in any dome,
To drink his cup of wine, he'd don
robes the same colour as the dome.
The bride would sit with him therein,
displaying charms of every kind,
So that she might entrance the king,
and he her sweetness might consume.
She'd tell him tales that made love grow,
and fuelled the ardent heart. Yet though
He built him such a fortress, he
could not escape death finally.
Nizami, flee the rose garden:
its roses are but sharpest thorns.
In such a realm, a two-days' rest,
see what befell Bahram at last.
32.
How Bahram Sat on a Saturday in the Black Dome:
The Tale of the Princess of the First Clime.
When Bahram pleasure sought, he set
his eyes on those seven fair portraits;
On Saturday from Shammasi temple went
in Abbasid black to pitch his tent;
Entered the musk-hued dome, and gave
his greetings to the Indian maid.
Till night he there made merry sport,
burnt aloes-wood, and scattered scent.
When night in kingly fashioned spilled
black grains of musk on whitest silk,
The king from that Kashmiri spring
sought perfume like the dawn breeze brings:
That she might loose some women's words,
sweet stories, from her store of pearls,
Those tales for which all hearers long,
and soothe to sleep the drunken man.
That Turk-eyed, Hindu-born gazelle
loosed fragrant musk, her tale to tell.
Said she, 'May the king's fanfare play
above the moon's high throne; and may
He live as long as turns the world;
may all heads at his threshold bow.
May he gain all his wishes; may
his fortune never flag.' This prayer
Concluded, she bowed low, and loosed
from sugared lips sweet aloes-wood.
The First Tale.
She told (her eyes cast down in shame)
a tale unmatched by anyone:
When young, a kinswoman told me
(clever and quick of thought was she),
A lady of the palace, a place
like Paradise; she gentle, chaste,
Each month would come unto our house,
in robes of blackest silk all dressed.
'From what deep fear or dread', they asked,
'hide you your silvery form in black?
'Tis best you share your tale with us:
whiten this blackness; now, you must
Tell us, from your goodwill, the truth:
what means the marvel of this black?'
She, seeing no escape from truth,
said, 'Since you will not leave untold
The tale of this black silk, I'll give
the story, that you may believe.'

The Lady's Tale.
I served a certain king (now dead),
said she, with whom I happy lived.
One great and fortunate, who kept
his flock in safety from the wolf.
He'd suffered much, and striven long,
and dressed in black from suffering wrong.
The sphere, at his unhappy fate,
called him 'The King Who Dressed in Black'.
The robes he used to wear at first
were red and yellow, of great worth.
He, like the rose, of guests was fond,
smiled on them like the red rose-bud.
He kept a guest-house, well disposed,
which from earth to the Pleiads rose;
With feasts prepared and carpets spread,
servants to kind affection bred.
Whoso arrived was made to stay;
and he himself the host would play.
When they had laid a fitting feast,
and entertained him as was meet,
The king would ask the guest his tale,
of home and travels, good and ill.
Whatever wonders he had seen
he then recounted to the king.
In such wise the king spent his days
lifelong, and never changed his ways.
A while he vanished from our sight;
hid himself from us, Simurgh-like.
A while of him we had no news;
he hid, like the eanqa, from view;
Then suddenly, one day, returned,
through Fortune's favour, to the throne.
Robe, crown, and shirt: his form was clad
from head to toe in black. He ruled
Wisely thereafter, ever dressed
in mourner's black, without a loss.
He dwelt in blackness, like the Stream
of Life; none asked, 'What does this mean?'
One night, with love and sympathy,
I waited on that qihla; he
Reclined upon my lap; complained
of what the stars had brought to him.
'See what a Turkish raid Heaven made;
what games with such a prince it played.
It banished me from Iram's green;
made my black lot a legend seem.
None asked, "Where is that region? Why
does black upon your silver lie?"'
I thought how best to answer; pressed
my face against his feet, and said,
'O best of rulers, who supports
all those who sorrow: who on earth
Has power to attempt the task
of scraping Heaven with an axe,
Seeking to know a hidden tale?
you know it, you alone can tell.
The King of Black's Tale.
When my lord found me worth his trust,
he pierced his rubies, loosed his musk,
And said: Since I, in sovereignty,
did practise hospitality,
All men I met, both good or ill,
I'd ask each one to tell his tale.
One day a stranger came from the road;
all black his turban, shoes, and robe.
When I'd seen to his needs, I then
called him to me, and honoured him.
'O you whom I know not,' I asked,
'why are your garments all of black?'
'Leave off this talk,' he said; 'for none
knows where the Simurgh may be found.'
'Tell me,' I begged; 'make no excuse;
tell me of pitch-pot and of pitch.'
'You must excuse me; this affair
cannot be told,' the man declared.
'None knows the secret of this black,
save he who wears it on his back.'
I strengthened my cajolery
(both skilled in bargaining were we),
But nought could make him lift the veil;
my blandishments did nought avail.
When past all measure grew my pleas,
he grew ashamed at my unease,
And said, 'In China's land there lies
a realm adorned like Paradise.
Its name, the Land of Lost Wit-Lack;
the mourning-house of those in black.
Its folk, fair-featured as the moon,
all, like the moon, black silk put on.
Whoever feasts his eyes upon
that land, it makes him black robes don.
Whose fate lies there, his tale, unknown
though it may be, is wondrous strange.
Now, though you shed my blood for it,
I will not tell you more than this.'
He said this, and prepared to leave,
closing the door upon my need.
Thus, having lulled me with that tale,
the story-teller went away
From me; him gone, the tale unknown,
I feared I would go mad. Though on
And on about that tale I pried,
and played my pawn on every side,
His powerful queen did not allow
my king to take that castle. Though

I tricked my mind with patience feigned,
within my heart no patience reigned.
Open and secret, all about
I asked, but no one told me ought.
Finally, I forsook my realm,
leaving a kinsman as its king.
Sufficient robes, with wealth and gems,
I took, to ease the anxious mind.
I long that city's name enquired;
I went, and found what I desired:
A town like Iram's garden decked,
where all a banner raised of musk.
As white as milk the face of each,
all dressed in garments black as pitch.
I settled in a house, and piled
therein my rich stuffs, bale on bale.
A year I sought that city's tale,
but none its secret would reveal.
When long the matter I had pondered,
an honest butcher I encountered,
A fair, refined, and gentle man
who spoke no ill of anyone.
His goodness and sound judgement made
me seek a way to be his friend.
When I had met him, I prepared
ways to deceive him, unaware,
I gave to him abundant treasure,
and fresh-faced coinage without measure.
His worth I added to each day;
his iron with gold did overlay.
Him utterly my prey I made:
now silks bestowed, now silk-faced maids.
The butcher, at this golden shower,
was, ox-like, led unto the slaughter.
I so inveigled him with gold,
he groaned beneath that weighty wealth.
One day he took me to his house;
prepared a more than lavish feast.
He decked a tray, brought food, expressed
devoted service to his guest.
That feast contained all things required
except his guest's longed-for desire.
When we had sampled every plate,
we sat and talked of this and that.
The feast concluded, my good host
offered me countless precious gifts;
And all I'd given him he brought
before me, and my pardon sought.
'So many precious gifts', he said,
'no jeweller has ever weighed.
I'm happy with the slightest gain:
what cause on me these gifts to rain?
What recompense does this deserve?
declare it, so that I may serve.
I've but one life; but if it were
a thousand, it would still fall short.'
I said, 'What servitude is this;
what rawness? show more ripened wits.
In the scales of such a learned man,
what weight or worth has this humble one?'
Then to my well-trained, knowing slaves,
winking, a secret sign I gave,
To hasten to my private store
and bring back golden coinage pure.
I gave him, of that precious coin,
more than that which before I'd given.
He, heedless at the snare I'd laid,
abashed at my affection, said,
'My debt to you before this night
I have not managed to requite;
Once more you precious gifts bestow
which cause me shame; what may I do?
I have not laid your gifts here at
your feet, for you to take them back;
But such a treasure must be earned
through toil and effort. I was shamed
When you on treasure treasure heaped;
though you're content, I'm ill at ease.
If I can be of help, then say;
if not, take all your gifts away.'
When his support thus heartened me,
his friendship I could clearly see.
My lengthy tale I told to him:
about my kingship and my realm;
Why I had to this region come,
abandoning my royal throne,
That I might learn why all within
this city suffer, without pain;
Why all, in sorrow, dress in black.
My words took the good man aback,
And, like the sheep who fears the wolf,
affrighted, he his silence kept.
A while he stood in mute alarm,
and closed his eyes as if in shame.
'You've asked what is not right to say;
but I will tell you what I may.'
When night over camphor amber poured,
and men left their accustomed roads,
He said, ' 'Tis time you be apprised
of what you wish to know. Arise,
And I the secret will unveil;
the form of the unshown reveal.'
He said this; left the house, and led
me towards the way. He went ahead,
While I, the stranger, followed on;
with us there was no other man.

Fay-like, he bore me far from men,
and led me towards a ruined land.
When we that ruined place had reached,
like peris we were veiled by it.
Tied to a rope, a basket lay;
he went and brought it quietly,
A rope around the basket bound:
a dragon, round snake's basket wound,
And said, 'Sit here a while; display
yourself to Heaven and earth; this way
Perhaps you'll learn why those who lack
the will to speak, wear robes of black.
What good or bad remains concealed
nought but this basket can reveal.'
The basket looked to be quite sound;
I stepped into it and sat down.
The basket (once I settled there)
became a bird, took to the air.
By some strange trick of rings, it bore
me up to the ring-juggling sphere.
The man pulled the rope magically;
I, wretched, did rope-dancing try.
The rope stuck like a candle wick
to me; clung tight to my frail neck.
A captive by bad fortune bound,
the rope around my neck was wound,
And choked me. Fortune's donkey had
bolted, taking the rope. And though
That rope wound round my body tight,
it was my only thread of life.
A column stood there, rising high,
so tall one craned the neck to see.
The basket reached the column's top,
the rope its end; it fell from off
My neck, and helped to set me loose.
I cried aloud, but 'twas no use.
Above, below, I cast my eyes,
and found myself up in the skies.
On me the sky had cast a spell;
I, like it, hung aloft; that peril
Made me think that my life was over;
my eyes were blinded by my fear.
I dared not look above, and yet
lacked courage to look down; I shut
My eyes in terror; gave myself
to helplessness and dread. I felt
Repentance for that tale of mine,
and longed to see my home and kin.
That penitence brought me no gain
but fear of God and prayers to Him.
When some time passed, as there I stood
atop that lofty column, a bird
Of mountainous size alighted there,
and made me desperate with fear.
So huge from head to foot, a column,
you'd say, that from its place had fallen.
Wings like the branches of a tree,
feet like a throne's legs; massive beak,
Like a tall column in Bisitun,
mighty without, a cave within.
Examining itself, it scratched
continuously; each feather root
It scratched poured out, like oyster-shells,
a copious shower of shining pearls.
Each precious feather that it preened
scattered a musk-bag on the ground.
It went to sleep above my head;
like one who drowns I then despaired.
'If I should grasp his foot,' thought I,
'he'll clutch me to him like his prey;
If I stay here, this place is full
of peril both above, below.
That faithless man, unchivalrous,
has put me in this dreadful pass.
Why has he so tormented me,
rendered me helpless in this way?
Did my wealth lead him from the path,
that he's delivered me to death?
Better to grasp the bird's leg, and
escape this peril, if I can.'
At cock-crow, when the sun came up,
and birds and beasts all started up,
That great bird's heart was heated too;
it flapped its wings, and off it flew.
Trusting in God, I raised my hands,
and grasped its leg; it spread its wings,
Drew feet together, swift flew high,
and bore this earth-born to the sky.
From early morn until midday
I travelled, filled with great dismay.
When the sun's heat became intense,
and over our heads the sky had passed,
The bird then longed for cool and shade,
and, drifting slowly down, he made
His way, until he reached a spot
but a mere lance's throw to earth,
Over ground as green as silk, with scents
of rose-water and ambergris.
I blessed that bird a hundredfold;
let go my grasp; like lightning fell,
With heart aflame, and came to rest
on tender flowers and soft grass.
A while I lay there where I fell,
my heart consumed with thoughts of ill;
Then, rested, gave thanks to my Lord,
and felt myself somewhat restored.

I looked around, myself again,
and scanned that place before, behind.
I saw a garden untouched by
the dust of men; its earth the sky.
A myriad flowers blossomed there,
its water sleeping, grass aware.
Each flower was of a different shade;
the scent of each for miles did spread.
The lassos of the hyacinths
bound up the tresses of the pinks.
Jasmine bit roses' lips; deep grass
silenced the flowering Judas-trees.
The dust was camphor, ambergris
the earth, sands gold, the stones all gems.
Streams flowed like rose-water, and hid
pearls and carnelians in their midst;
A spring from which our turquoise fort
begged both its hue and lustre bright.
The fish in those bright streams did play
like silver coins in mercury.
Girt by a mount of emerald hue,
where cypress, pine, and poplar grew,
Its stones were all of rubies red,
its poplars with their colour dyed;
Sandal and aloes everywhere;
with them the breeze perfumed the air.
It seemed of houris' forms devised,
who taxes paid from Paradise.
'Heart's-ease' its name by Iram given,
and by the turquoise sphere called Heaven.
I, finding it, was filled with joy,
like one who treasure-hoards puts by.
Its beauty left me all amazed,
and for its sake great God I praised.
All up and down I wandered it,
that garden that so soothed the sight;
I ate of its delicious fruits
and thanked God for its benefits.
At last, in joy, I rested me
beneath a cypress, like it free.
Till eve I moved not from my place,
nor would had I a thousand tasks.
I ate a little, slept a bit,
and always uttered thanks, as fit.
When night adorned itself anew,
put crimson by, took on kohl's hue,
A wind, more restful than a breeze
in spring, came and dispersed the dust
From the road. A spring-like cloud then passed
and sprinkled pearls upon the grass.
The road, thus swept and dampened down,
grew filled with idols like a shrine.
Far off I saw a myriad lights,
which made my patient calm take flight:
A world with radiant forms ashine,
all bred with grace, like fragrant wine.
Each idol fresh as early spring,
grasping another by the hand.
Their ruby lips, like tulips, shamed
the sugar-cane of Khuzistan.
Their limbs were decked with chains of gold;
their necks and ears wore lustrous pearls.
They kingly candles bore, which lacked
trimmers or smoke, or circling moths.
Graceful and charming, they advanced,
with myriad beauties. On their heads
Those houri forms bore carpets, thrones
like those of Paradise. They then
Spread carpets, set up thrones, and stole
my patience quite away. A while
Went by; and then it seemed
as if a moon came down from Heaven.
A brilliant sun came from afar
whose light made Heaven disappear.
Those houris, peris, round her were
like to a myriad morning stars.
A cypress she, those maids her mead;
they jasmine, she a rose of red.
Each maid a candle in her hand;
sugar and candles are well joined.
The garden filled with cypress forms,
all brilliant jewels, with shining lamps.
That Fortune-favoured queen approached;
bride-like, sat on her royal couch.
When she sat down, the quiet world
was on all sides to turmoil stirred.
She sat a moment, then removed
her veil, and bent to doff her shoes.
A queen came forth from her palace dome,
Greek troops before, Ethiops behind.
Her Greeks and blacks, like two-hued dawn,
set Ethiop troops 'gainst those of Rum.
Narrow of eyes, not miserly;
others of earth, of pure light she.
Rose-like she sat a while, head bowed,
and kindled fire throughout the world.
A while elapsed; she raised her head,
and to a maiden near her said,
'It seems to me an earthly wight
has trespassed here, without the right.
Rise, swiftly round this compass wind,
and bring whomever you may find.'
That peri-born maid rose, and, like
a peri, flew to every side.
On seeing me she stood amazed,
then seized my hand in friendly wise.

'Arise,' she said; 'like smoke we'll go;
the queen of queens has ordered so.'
I added nothing to her words,
for I had hoped for them. I sped
Crow-like, with that peacock, and came
to the bride's throne. I hastened then
Towards her; humbly kissed the ground
before her, I, an earth-born man.
She said, 'Arise; 'tis not your place;
such servitude is but disgrace.
With such a loving host, the guest
should not have rind; the pith is best;
Especially a handsome friend,
by a skilled master duly trained.
Come to the throne, sit next to me;
Pleiads and Moon well-mated be.'
'O angel-natured queen,' I said,
'do not speak thus to me, your slave.
No place for demons, Sheba's throne;
'tis fit for Solomon alone.'
'Make no excuses; 'tis no avail
to show a sorceress your wiles.
This place is yours, beneath your sway;
but you must sit and rise with me,
So that you may my secret learn,
enjoyment of my love to earn.'
'Your shade's your only peer,' I said;
'my crown is dust at your throne's foot.'
'Now by my head and life,' she cried,
'you must a while stay by my side.
You are my guest; and one must show
a worthy guest all honour due.'
Since I saw nothing but to serve,
I rose before her like a slave.
A servant kindly took my hand,
set me upon the throne, and then
Retired. Seated thereon, I saw
a moon, and seized it in my snare.
With sweetest blandishments she spoke
to me. Then she commanded that
A tray be brought, upon it heaped
more food than can be told. A feast
Those Paradisal treasures set,
whose foods diffused sweet amber's scent.
A turquoise tray, a ruby bowl,
which nourished both the eyes and soul.
Whatever fancy could conceive
the cook brought forth. When we had ceased
To eat hot victuals, and consume
fresh, cooling draughts, the minstrel came,
The saqi passed the cup. Then mirth
could not excuse itself. Fair pearls
Unpierced, bored precious pearls of song,
as those maids sang of love. Dance then
Opened a square, a circle closed,
gave wings unto the feet of those
Who joined. Dancers like tapers stood
erect, with candles on their heads.
Then, when they rested from the dance,
against the wine they made advance.
The saqi swiftly poured the wine;
it rent the barrier of shame.
I, strong with love, with wine's excuse,
behaved as one who's drunk too much;
That sweet-lipped one, in sympathy,
made no objection to my play.
Seeing her friendly towards my suit,
I fell like curls before her feet.
I kissed her hands; she cried, 'Desist!'
The more she begged, the more I kissed.
The bird of hope lit on the branch;
I thought my pleas would have a chance.
I sought, with kisses and with wine,
to make that precious beauty mine.
'My love,' said I, 'what will you? Fame
you surely have; what is your name?'
She said, 'A lissome Turk I am,
Turktaz the Beautiful my name.'
'In harmony and accord,' I said,
'our names are to each other wed.
How strange that Turktaz is your name,
for mine, Turktazi, is the same.
Rise; let us make a Turkish raid;
cast Hindu aloes on the flames.
Take life from the Magian cup;
with it, on lovers' sweetmeats sup.
We've sweetest fruits and bitter wine;
let's serve the fruits, take wine in hand.'
Her glances, actions, gave me leave
all distance 'tween us to remove.
Her glance said, ' 'Tis your time to play;
come; Fortune smiles on you this day.'
Her smiles encouraged me to seek
sweet kisses, for my love was weak.
Admitted to that treasure-trove,
I sought one, she a thousand gave,
I warmed as one who's drunk with wine,
clasped tight my love (things out of hand).
My blood boiled in my heart; the sound
soon reached the ears of that fair moon.
She said, 'Make do with kisses now'
tonight; strive not for any more.
Beyond this nothing is allowed;
true lovers should show gratitude.
Caress my curls while you are calm;
steal kisses, bite my lips; but when

You reach the moment when you can
no more from nature turn the reins,
From all these maidens, each a moon,
the dawn of lovers' night, she whom
You find most pleasing to your sight,
and on her your desire lights,
Bid me detach her from my band,
and bring her under your command,
That she may serve you lovingly
within a private chamber; be
Both bride and servant; steal your heart
and give you hers; with loving art
Put out your burning flame, and seem
like coolest water from my stream.
If, the next night, you should require
a new bride, I'll grant your desire;
Each night bestow a precious pearl,
and yet another, if you will.'
Her speech done, she then treated me
with kindness and with sympathy.
She looked covertly at her maids;
that one who gifts of love displayed
She summoned, gave to me with love;
'Rise, and do what you will,' she said.
That moon, thus given, took my hand;
I at her moon-like beauty stunned.
With charm, seductiveness, and grace,
she was for love a worthy mate.
She went; I followed, by her curls
enslaved, and by her Hindu mole,
Until we reached a chamber fair;
she waited, while I went before.
Once in that private palace, we
accorded like sweet harmony.
I saw, upon a high-placed couch,
a sleeping-place of finest silks.
Bright candles on the carpet shone,
with amber smoke and ruby flame.
We laid us down, embracing, on
the pillow; clasping her, I found
A harvest like red roses in
white willows, slender, soft, and warm.
She was a shell whose door was sealed;
I took the seal from her jewel.
She lay with me till morning's dusk,
my bed all camphor and sweet musk.
At dawn she, like my fortune, rose,
prepared my bath; an ewer brought
For me to wash, all set about
with gold, and crimson gems. I washed
Myself in rose-water, and bloomed
just like the rose, in belt and crown.
Out of that treasure-house I came;
the stars were scattered over the heavens.
I crept into an empty spot,
and offered up my thanks to God.
Those idols, brides of Turkestan,
had all departed, everyone.
Exhausted, like a yellowed rose,
by a cool spring, on meadow's grass,
Wine-dazed, I laid my head upon
dried roses, with moist curls. From dawn
To dusk I slept, my fortune yet
awake, the lord asleep, content.
When musk was loosed by night's gazelle,
the musky sphere was filled with pearls.
I raised my head from languorous dreams,
and sat, like verdure, next the stream.
That cloud, that breeze, came as before:
one scattered pearls, one perfume bore.
The breeze did sweep, the cloud did shower;
one jasmine sowed, violets the other.
When amber-scented grew the plain,
it filled with sweet rose-water streams.
The sportive maids again drew near;
the sky became a puppeteer.
They brought a throne, a slab of gold,
its covering with jewels made.
When that high couch had been arrayed,
and on it silken carpets laid,
A royal feast was then set out,
and with bright lights was decked about.
The world was in a tumult; from
all sides those beauteous maids did come;
That Turkish bride was in their midst,
who patience stole from lovers' hearts.
She settled on that golden throne;
from her it took the hue of spring.
Again, she bade them find me; clear
my name from the roll of those not there.
I came; they bade me mount the throne,
and, as their custom, sit thereon.
Then, like the day before, they laid
a tray with food upon it, spread
With victuals to delight the heart,
a worthy feast, which joy imparts.
They did all that was fitting; then,
when all had finished eating, wine
Was brought; they played the harp, and smote
the strings with sweet and loving blows.
Sweet cupbearers, refreshing wine:
love's market grew increasing warm.
Intoxication filled the brain
as love and wine worked hand in hand.
My Turk was merciful; displayed
compassion to her Hindu slave.

Her wish to favour me increased;
her kind attentions never ceased.
With glances at her friends she signed,
until they left us quite alone.
Such privacy, a love so fine:
my heart's hot fire assailed my brain.
Like twisting curls I grasped her waist,
and lover-like my love embraced.
'Beware; 'tis not the moment now
for hastiness, or breaking vows,'
She said; 'enough my sugared lips,
that you may freely bite and kiss.
For he who's with contentment pleased
will ever find a life of ease;
But he who makes desire his friend
will be a beggar in the end.'
'For God's sake find some remedy,'
I cried; 'I drown; pain pierces me.
Your pitch-black curls are twisting chains,
and I a madman bound by them.
Chain up your door, I tell you, lest,
like madmen, I should lose my wits.
The night is over; dawn is near;
but there's no end to this affair.
Slay me; my life is yours; my head
is here, and there the sharpened blade.
But why all this resistance feign?
The rose smiles-not before the rain.
I seek the water of your stream;
though earth, sweet perfumed water bring.
To him who thirsts, by your love bound,
give water, and he'll do the same.
But if you won't, live long, and see
my honour dust beneath your feet.
Think me a clod by water borne;
a thirsting man drowned in the stream.
Let not an atom thirst, but give
a drop to one who thirsts. Believe
Me but a date that's drowned in milk,
a needle in the midst of silk.
If it be other, I shall rise
and cast dust in desire's eyes;
Think it a bird which lit and flew,
and not an ass which lost its load.'
She answered, 'Be content tonight,
e'en though love's flame be burning bright.
Put off this fancy for a night,
and you will gain eternal light.
Don't sell the well for a mere drop;
one sting, the other honey sweet.
On this one craving shut your door,
and laugh with joy forever more.
Take kisses, and caress my curls,
but play your game with other girls.
Don't seek to leave; the garden's yours;
don't seek milk from the captured bird.
You've pleasure and enjoyment; why
then turn your hand to treachery?
Tonight be patient; do not fight,
but seek the duty of last night.
When I descend from this degree,
I will be won, though late it be.
Each garden's rose-bud boasts a shield;
but different the carnation's field.
From the sweet water you will gain
a fish; later, the moon obtain.'
Finding her slow that game to play,
I calmed myself, feigned to agree.
I set my heart on kisses sweet,
and fasted from all other meat.
In amorous vein I quaffed the wine;
patiently watched the heated pan.
By wine and kisses sweet renewed,
again my fevered passion grew.
When my fair Turk saw once again
my heart consumed by blazing flame,
She with another maid conspired
to quench the flames of my desire:
A mate such as the heart might wish
(the heart wills all in measure fit).
Who finds his love's a happy man;
may every love be like that one.
I went that night, like that before;
that night my joy was even more.
I supped on sugar sweet till dawn;
with that fay-maiden joined my hand.
When day had bleached its robe to white
and night, that dyer, broke its pot,
Those colours which bewitched the sight
forsook the carpet of delight.
I sat beneath a cypress tree,
no confidant or company,
Hoping that when night came again
I'd drink with those fair maids of Chin;
Wind Turkish tresses round my waist;
clasp a sweet charmer to my breast;
Now drink a cup with lips full sweet;
now gain my wish from rose-red cheeks.
When night fell my desire was met,
my throne above the Pleiads set.
For some while more, with lute and wine,
each night unending joys were mine:
Gazing on light as night began,
a houri with me at its end.
By day I in the garden dwelled,
by night in Paradise, mid soil

Of musk, a golden house; I reigned
over the clime of joy; the sun
I held by day, at night the moon;
lacked for no wish; my fortune e'en
Was as it showed. Yet since I was
ingrate, for blessings in excess,
Joy's words I from my pages washed,
for I sought more than more. At last
When thirty nights the moon had seen,
night covered up the stars, and turned
The world to black; Heaven's amber locks
grasped the moon's curls in fond embrace.
That cloud and breeze which came before
their fresh appearance made once more.
Again the world their tumult stirred;
the sound of ornaments was heard;
And as before those maidens' hands
held apples; pomegranates their breasts.
They came, set up that throne, then formed
a circle, and gave voice to song.
That sun-like moon came too; her locks
poured over her breast, and scattered musk.
Candles before, behind, as ere
her wont; nay, candles came before.
With all her beauties, charm and grace,
she went unto her feasting-place.
The minstrels tuned their instruments,
the singers on their songs intent.
The cupbearers, to the harp's strain,
began to pour the crimson wine.
Their queen those sweet-lipped beauties bade,
'Go, quickly bring to me my mate.'
Those beauties led me gracefully,
and to my queen delivered me.
Seeing me bent on love, she rose,
and set me on her right; I bowed,
And greeted her with joy; and then

my past wish came to mind again.
They laid the accustomed feast, and brought
rare dishes beyond count. We ate
Our fill of that fine fare. Then wine
arrived to make the banquet shine.
The saqis' generous hands poured pearls
(wine's bubbles) from the mouths of shells.
Wine flowed like song, and sweeter than
the honeyed syrup of Nihavand.
Drunken with passion, once again
I took her rope-like curls in hand;
Again my demons 'scaped their bonds,
and me, the madman, firmly bound.
I, spider-like, played with her locks,
and learned that night rope-dancing tricks;
Mad as an ass for grain; struck down
in fits, as if by the new moon.
A-tremble like a thief who spies
a treasure-hoard, I clasped her waist;
Caressed pure silver; passion grew
more hard to bear, I weak. She saw
My state, that beauteous moon, and placed
her hand on me with love, then kissed
My hand, cruel houri! so that I
would take it from the treasure. 'Ah,'
She said; 'touch not the treaure sealed;
the grasping hand will miss the goal.
One cannot take the seal away
that guards the mine; it cannot be.
The date-tree's yours; now patient wait,
and do not haste to reach the dates.
Drink wine; the roast will come anon.
The sun will rise; regard the moon.'
'Sun of my garden, source (said I)
of light, light-giver to my eyes:
Your face's morn like roses blooms;
my own light fades, by yours consumed.
You show sweet water to a youth
who thirsts; then tell him, "Close your mouth;
Drink not!" Sweet reason, at the sight
of your fair face, goes mad, fay-struck.
When you display your pearl-hung ear,
you cast my iron in the fire.
Can I resist the moon's night raid?
Or with a mote the bright sun shade?
How stay my hand, when you are here?
I know no grief when you are near.
You are earth-born, and so am I;
but I'm a man, if you're a fay.
How long, then, bite my kips in pain,
and swallow disappointment? Find
Some way, for grief overwhelms me, that
I gain my heart's desire tonight.
Support my fortune; let us work
together; make me fortunate.
You say, "Grieve not; I am your friend;
continue; I will be yours soon."
When was there a calamity
like this? I need you! Set me free!
O fair gazelle I hold so dear:
how long false promises? I fear
That ancient wolf, with foxlike wiles,
will soon his nature base reveal;
Attack me as one would a lion,
and fell me like a leopard. I'm
Impassioned with you; let me now
obtain what I desire from you.
If you against my love shut tight

the door, I'll be consumed tonight.
Indulge me, for sultans and kings
indulge their guests in everything.'
Seeing my patience once more fled,
'I shall do; stay your hand,' she said.
'I'll favour you, at life's own cost;
if you're a Turk, I am your black.
What matter if I sacrifice,
for such a guest, my humble life?
But that desire for which you long:
you'll find it late, but seek it soon.
When Paradise grows from a thorn,
by me shall such a deed be done;
When sandal scent from willow comes,
then shall I such an act perform.
Take from me what you will, save that
one wish, which has not ripened yet.
My lips, my cheeks, my breast: all yours;
save one pearl, all my treasure's hoard.
If you're content with this, you'll gain
a thousand nights like that to come.
Now that your heart's inflamed by wine,
I'll give a saqi like the moon,
That you may take your pleasure's fee
from her, and loose your grasp from me.'
But that fair queen's beguiling words
I heeded not, although I heard.
I strove a while for calm and shame,
my fire ablaze, my iron aflame.
'You fool,' my fortune said; 'beyond
this Abadan there is no town.'
Thus I, unripe, from seeking more,
fell into less., I still implored,
'O you who make things hard for me,
who've stolen all my peace away:
Thousands of men have died of love,
when none has found the treasure-trove.
How shall I stay my hand, who've gained
this treasure, though I suffer pain?
While I have breath, I have no power
to stay my hand from your dark hair.
Kindle my lamp upon this throne,
or nail me like a plank thereon.
Rise up upon the mat and dance,
or shed my blood upon this place.
My heart and life, my wit and sight:
how can I live without you? Might
I, heart-enslaver, gain my goal,
I'd give my life for it. For who
Would not buy such a hoard for nought,
nor pay for such desire with life?
Your honeyed lips aren't marred by flies;
no thorns surround your rose-like face.
Who would not eat rose-honey sweets?
Let him who would not, never eat!
Now kindle me like candle's flame,
since like a lamp I burn with pain.
Lamp-like I burn; love gives me life,
else I would perish from love's spark.
For if the blazing sun did not
revolve, mankind would lack for light.
'Tis not my own desire I seek;
'tis but a dream of which I speak.
No doubt my brain's asleep. What then?
Dead or asleep, 'tis all the same.
But had my eyes your face not seen,
how would they then have known such dreams?
Be quick, if you would shed my blood,
for speed's required for such a deed.'
Then, blood aboil and brain afire,
I set upon that blossom rare.
I quickly grasped the treasure's door,
its' ruby with jacinth to bore.
With sweet lament she, patient, sought
a brief respite; I listened not.
'The treasure shall be yours,' she swore;
'tonight hope, tomorrow your desire.
Since, in your suit, you've borne this plight
from day to day and night to night,
Tonight make do with hope of treasure;
tomorrow night you'll take your pleasure.
To wait one night you can endure;
'tis but one night, and not a year.'
She spoke; but I, like dagger honed,
clasped tight her waist, and blindly clung,
Her plea but whetted my desire
for her a hundredfold, and more,
Until my quickly grasping hand
prevailed upon that close-tied band.
When she perceived my harshness, my
impatience, my anxiety,
'A moment close your eyes,' she said,
'till I unlock the sugared hoard.
When I disclose that which you prize,
embrace me; open then your eyes.'
I, at her sweet pretext, shut fast
my eyes against her treasure. At last,
After a brief respite, she said,
'Open your eyes,' and so I did,
Prepared at last to seize my prey,
to clasp that bride in my embrace,
But when I looked towards my bride,
I found me in that basket tied,
No man nor woman near; alone,
my sole companion sighs and groans;
Without light's radiance, like a shade,

a Turk, far from that Turkish raid.
Thus troubled, 'neath the column I felt
the basket give a sudden jolt.
My friend came and unloosed the rope
which bound my basket to that vault.
My fortune, sated with this game,
brought down my basket to the ground.
He who'd avoided me, and fled,
embraced me and, repentant, said,
'A hundred years I might have told
this tale; you'd not have grasped its truth.
You went and saw what was concealed;
to whom could it have been revealed?
I too from that hot passion burned,
and dressed in black at being wronged.'
I said, 'Like me, you've been oppressed;
I find that your decision's best.
I, wronged, in silence, have no choice
but to wear black; go now, and fetch
Black silks.' He went, and quickly brought
the very blackness of the night.
I donned those silken robes of black;
began that night the journey back,
And, mantled all in black, returned,
heart filled with sorrow, to my land.
Thus I, who am the King of Black,
like black clouds now bewail my lack:
That my desire, so nearly gained,
was, through my rawness, unattained.
When my lord had his tale revealed,
and told me that which was concealed,
I, who was but his concubine,
made that which he had chosen mine.
With Sikandar, to mourn the lack
of Life's bright Stream, I entered black.

The moon in blackness shines forth bright,
king-like, 'neath parasol of night.
There is no better hue than black;
fish-bone's less prized than fish's back.
Black hair's a sign of youth; and down
of black the youthful face adorns.
The eye's black pupil views the world,
and robes of black are never soiled.
The moon, if night's fine silks weren't black,
would a fit bridal chamber lack.
Seven colours 'neath the seven thrones:
no colour beyond black is known.
When to Bahram the Indian maid
her tale in full had thus displayed,
The king upon her words rained praise;
embraced her; slept in joyful ease.
33.
How Bahram Sat on a Sunday in the Yellow Dome:
The Tale of the Greek King's Daughter.
When morning's scales had filled with gold
the mountain's collar, the plain's robe,
On Sunday, like the sun, the world
illuming lamp was veiled in gold.
He grasped a golden cup, like Jam;
sun-like, a golden crown put on,
And bound on, like the yellow rose,
his signet ring, amber and gold.
Towards the gold dome, scattering gold,
he went; his joy grew hundredfold.
He joy's foundation laid with wine
and music's strains; and when night came,
Not night; love's bridal chamber, veil
of lovers, by its dark concealed,
He bade that sugar-scattering torch
join ruby lips to sweet discourse,
And make, from the sweet strains of song,
sweet music in that golden dome.
Swiftly to his command she bowed
(excuses do not please the proud).
The Chinese-adorned bride of Rum
said, 'Lord of Rum, Taraz, and Chin,
Ruler of kings, who give them life;
exalted be your victory.
The heads of those who serve you not
are trodden 'neath your mighty foot.'
When she had paid her homage meet,
she made her breath as incense sweet.
The Tale of the Slave-selling King.
She said: A town in Iraq's land
boasted a world-illuming king,
A brilliant sun, without a peer,
as beautiful as spring's New Year.
All skills which can be reckoned up;
all the accomplished man might hope
To have, he had; and with all that,
with solitude he was content.
For in his horoscope he'd read
he'd dwell in conflict if he wed;
Because of this he sought no wife,
so that he might not suffer strife.
So for a while he dwelt alone
in solitude; was close to none.
To ease his pain, he hoped to find
a loving maid who suited him.
Though many lovely slaves he bought,
none served him in the way he sought.
Within a week or so, each one
overstepped her limits, and put on
Fine airs, like ladies, asking for
the treasures of Qarun, and more.

The palace held a hunchbacked crone
who baited fools; a stupid woman.
Each slave the king might buy, that crone
found idle talk worked to her gain.
Each newly purchased maid she'd hail
as 'Rumi queen' and 'Turkish belle',
And so increased that maiden's pride
that she from service turned aside.
How many meddlers have their friends
thus taught their masters to disdain.
She called one maiden 'David's spouse',
another one, 'Mahmud's Ayaz',
A jewel-bedizened mangonel,
who ruined homes, and wives beguiled.
Despite the efforts of the king,
no maid would keep her place; each one
For whom he'd sewn love's garment, lacked
true love; and so he'd sell her back.
So many slaves he bought and sold,
that he 'the slave-dealer' was called.
All judged the matter from without,
and no one knew the inner truth.
From searching long the king grew tired;
burned at not finding his desire.
He married not, from hostile fate,
nor could he find a fitting mate.
He washed his hands of those whose skirts
were tainted; a pure beauty sought.
One day, the slave-trader informed
the king's slave-buyer: 'There has come
A merchant from fair-templed Chin,
a thousand houris in his train.
With many fair and untouched slaves
from Turkish Khallukh and Cathay.
Each face a candle world-illuming,
inspiring love, lovers consuming.
Among them is a fay-like maid
who puts the bright sun in the shade:
An unpierced pearl, this slave, whose price
this pearl-seller would set at life.
Her coral lips enclose fair pearls;
she's sharp of answer, sweet of smile.
When from her smile she sugar pours,
she makes the earth grow sweet for years.
Although her tray is full of sweets,
it sorrow brings to him who eats.
I, who pursue this trade, am dazed
by those dark curls, that mole, that face.
If you that beauty and allure
observe, you'll praise it too, I'm sure.'
The dealer was enjoined to bring
those slaves to that slave-knowing king.
He brought them; the king looked them over,
and then conversed with the slave-seller.
Though each was lovely as the moon,
she who was told of was a queen;
She was more lovely to the eyes
than all the informant had described.
The king said to the dealer, 'Say,
what is the nature of this maid?
If I should find her fitting, name
your price.' The Chinese merchant then
Unleashed his tongue: 'This fresh young maid,
with lips of honey, has,' he said,
'As you can see, all you require
of looks and charm, and sparks desire.
She's but one fault, and it is grave:
he who would bed her, she'll not have.
Whoever buys her, filled with joy,
returns her to me the next day;
For when he seeks to slake desire,
she brings the lover to despair;
And he who most importunes her
soon seeks his own destruction. For
Her nature can't be pleased; and you
(as I have heard) are like that too.
She thus, you thus, forget her; how
could this work out, things being so?
Say that you've bought her from me, and,
like others, given her back. Refrain
From buying her; that's best; and see
which other girl best suits your need.
Whoever pleases you, I'll send
at once (no charge) to your harem.'
Of all those peri-maids the king
observed, he wanted to buy none;
Except that first maid, fairy-faced,
his heart to none became attached.
He stood amazed: what should he do?
how play the game with one so raw?
Nor was he tired of her, nor could
he boldly buy her, with that fault.
At last love turned his head, and threw
dust in the eyes of patience; so
He paid her price in silver; gained
with silver coins those silver limbs.
On one desire the door he barred;
the snake slew, was from dragon freed.
Within his harem, that fair maid
did honest service for her lord.
A tender rose-bud she resembled;
with harsh demean her love dissembled.
Save intimacy, whose door she closed,
she shirked no service: kept the house,
Preserved the harem's trust; with kind
concern, ordered all one by one;

Though by the king like cypress raised,
she served him humbly as his shade.
That ancient crone her wiles arrayed,
and sought to bend that supple reed.
She cried out 'gainst that wicked crone
to call her nought but slave. The king,
Seeing her protest, grasped full well
the matter of the other girls.
He drove the woman from the place;
enmeshed in spells that sorceress.
So dear to him did grow that maid
that by her love he was enslaved.
Although her Turkish wiles enflamed,
he kept his passion tightly reined.
Until one night it so transpired
that both of them by love were fired.
the king lay by that lovely's side;
of furs and silks their couch was made.
Her fort was girt by watery moat,
his mangonel was fired up hot.
When sharp flames heated the king's blood,
he said to that moist-petalled rose,
'My luscious date, my own soul's eye,
my own eyes' life: the cypress tree
Next to your stature is like grass;
the moon draws water for your face.
I make but one request of you:
that what I ask, you'll answer true.
If your reply is, like your height,
upright, I too will deal aright.'
Then, for that purpose, sugared words
from lips fresh as the rose he poured.
'Bilqis, like Venus in sextile,
sat once with Solomon. In all
The world they but one son possessed,
crippled in hand and foot, helpless.
"O prophet-king," said Bilqis; "both
of us are sound from head to foot.
Why is our son afflicted so,
his limbs unsound? Someone must know
A remedy for his great pain;
when known, a cure can be obtained.
When Gabriel descends to bring
some message, tell the tale to him;
When he returns, he may discern
the secret from the Tablet. Then,
When he has found the cause, he'll show
the remedy, my king, to you.
Perhaps this child will once again
be sound; his former health regain."
Solomon with these words was pleased;
he waited, hoping, for some days.
And then, when Gabriel spoke with him,
he told his wish. The angel went;
Returned, with tidings of good cheer,
from Him Who made the azure sphere.
He said, "Two things provide the cure;
and those two things are very dear:
That when your wife sits with you, both
must to each other speak the truth.
From speaking truth (you must believe)
the child's pain will be relieved."
Bilqis rejoiced these words to hear:
the house would prosper with an heir.
She said, "Ask what you will of me,
that I may answer truthfully."
That lamp of life enquired of her,
"Fair one, of all eyes cynosure:
Did ever you desire to lie
with any in the world but me?"
Bilqis replied, "The Evil Eye
be far from you! who far outshine
The sun's bright fount. In beauty, youth
and rank, all others you outdo.
Good nature, lovely face, and kind;
Heaven your feast, and you Rizvan.
You rule over all, both hid and clear;
your prophet's Seal protects the world.
Despite all this, your youth, fair face,
your sovereignty, and your success,
Whenever I a young man see,
from base desires I am not free."
When the child heard this secret told,
he stretched his hand to her, and said,
"Mother, my hand is cured; no more
will I depend on others' care."
When she looked on her child and saw
that her truth had his strength restored,
She said, "O lord of div and fay,
like wisdom skilled, like virtue fair:
Before the child some secret show;
he's hands from me; give legs from you.
I'll ask (don't take my words amiss):
With all the treasures you possess,
Does never the longing you assail
to wish for someone else's wealth?"
The pious prophet said, "What none
in all the world possess, I own:
Wealth, treasure, and unequalled reign;
all these I have, from Fish to Moon.
Yet, with such perfect wealth, when I
see someone come to honour me,
I secretly glance at his hands,
to see what gifts he bears in them."
The child (this tale once truly told)
then moved his legs; rose from the ground;

Cried, "Father, see: my legs can move;
your judgement's let me grace the world."
Since truthfulness within God's shrine
thus banished from those limbs all pain,
'Tis best therefore that we too be
truthful, and shoot straight at the prey.
Tell me, O peerless lover, why
has your love grown so cold, when I
Suffer so greatly from desire,
yet look on you but from afar?
Why, with such beauty, have you grown
accustomed to aversion?'
The supple cypress by the pool
approved no answer but the truth.
She said, 'Our humble race has found
a quality which each one owns:
Whoever gives a man her heart
dies at the time of giving birth.
Since any woman dies who bears,
how should we give in to desire?
Why give up life for pleasure; eat
poison in honey? Far more sweet
Is life to me, than that I give
it up to what endangers it.
I love life, not a lover; now
I've laid my secret bare for you.
Now that the mystery's revealed,
keep me or sell me, as you will;
But since I've not concealed my mind,
and told you of my case, I find
Some hope that you, world-ruling king,
will not hide from me anything:
Why do you tire, year after year,
of slave-girls than the sun more fair;
Why do you give your heart to none?
Spend not a month with any one?
Treat one with great care like a lamp,
and, candle-like, snuff out again;
Raise one in love and ease to Heaven,
then cast her down to earth again?'
'This is because no one (said he)
has breathed a word of love to me.
All cared but for their own affairs;
were bad, though they appeared so fair.
Grown used to ease, they then forsook
the yoke of service. Each one's step
Matches his height; not all can eat
hard bread; one needs a stomach made
Of iron, that its mill may grind
all that it eats. A woman, when
She sees a man who's open, spins
a plan for both herself and him.
Don't trust a woman; she's a straw
the wind bears any way it will.
When she sees gold, like scales she'll tilt
towards one who is of lesser worth.
For when the pomegranate's full,
it's ripe with rubies, not with pearls;
Woman's like grapes, a child so pure,
white when raw, black when mature.
A household's women are called gourds;
they're raw when ripe, and ripe when raw.
A woman chaste her mate adorns;
the dark night, when it finds the moon,
Is beautiful. From all my maids
I witnessed nought but self-display.
In you I see that, now and then,
you show more than your task demands.
Thus, though you won't fulfil me, yet
without you I can find no rest.'
The king loosed several subtle shafts
like this at her; none hit the mark.
The saucy girl clung fast to her
excuse; his arrows ever erred.
So he continued to traverse,
burdened by grief, that stony pass.
Thirsting before sweet water, he
was patient, and the days sped by.
The old crone, whom the kingly maid
had put out of the palace, heard
The tale: the patient king had found
no way to her for whom he longed;
And how that newly ripened lass
had made that strong man powerless.
She thought, 'My time has come; perchance
I'll lead that fay a demon's dance;
Effect a breach in the sun's throne,
destroy the fortress of the moon;
So that no more will a straight shaft
strike an old woman's bow-like back.'
Witch-like, she sought to see the king
in private; used her wiles on him.
In vengeance 'gainst that radiant sun
she cast her spell upon the king;
Said, 'If you wish that untamed colt
beneath your saddle not to bolt,
Saddle a tame mount twice or thrice
before her; stroke it gently; thus
Horse-tamers who break colts can bring
wild mounts to bridle, bit, and rein.'
This seemed a clever trick to him;
the bricks made in her mould showed sound.
He bought a witty, graceful girl,
with lips like honey, wondrous skilled
In sport, in harem ways well trained,
and from birth one by nature tame.

Her clever and flirtatious ways
showed in each game an artist's grace.
The king feigned love for her, and cast
his lance with great pretence and craft.
In love for one he case his hook;
at time of need the other took;
Dallied with one, with the other slept;
here pierced a pearl, and there his heart.
He thought this way to gain his will,
and pierce at last the unbored pearl.
Though the king's plan had cast the dust
of jealousy on that moon's face,
She did not loyal service quit,
nor change from what she'd been a whit.
'What art. is this?' she thought; 'this storm
was cooked up by that aged crone.'
But patiently she held her peace
(patience in love brings no increase),
Until one night, in private, she
could seize her chance. Then, lovingly,
She said, 'O angel prince, who rule
the realm with faith and justice: you
Have championed truth and fairness; pray,
don't leave the path of truth with me.
Although each day which sees the light
begins with morn and ends with night,
You, may your days never grow less,
and may your nights sweet union bless,
Who once, like dawn, but sweetness brought,
why now bring bitterness, like night?
Even if you, without a taste,
are sated of me: why then cast
Me in the lion's mouth, to die
from grief; show dragons to my eyes?
If that my death is clear decreed,
come, slay me then with your own blade.
Who guided you along this way?
Instructed you this game to play?
Tell me, for I have lost my wits;
my heart is near to taking flight.
By God and by your life, I vow,
if you unlock this secret now,
I'll break the lock of the pearl-treasure,
and give myself to the king's pleasure.'
The king (for he was in her thrall)
trusted her oath, and told her all;
From that kind moon he nothing hid,
revealing all that could be said: '
My passion for you kindled fire
in which I burned from my desire.
My pain all patience cast away;
my body lost all power to stay,
Till that old woman found the cure
to heal me. With deceit, she urged
This trick upon me; and that dish,
untasted, brought me gain. I lit
A fire from my burning heat
to soften you with harsh deceit.
'Tis fire alone makes water hot;
'tis fire alone makes iron soft.
We're not my heart set on you, sure
your suffering were my best cure.
You kindled fire in my heart,
and that old woman made it smoke.
When, like a candle, you were straight
with me, the smoke did dissipate.
Now, when my sun knows joy in spring,
why then recall old winter's sting?'
Many such soothing words he said;
that lovely maiden loving heard.
The untamed Turk, seeing things thus,
gave way to lily-sweet cypress.
The nightingale perched on the bud's throne,
it opened, and the bird grew drunk.
A peacock saw a tray heaped high,
and scattered sugar on it; no fly
Buzzed there. Into the pool he cast
his fish; threw into milk his dates;
Marvelled at that sweet fluency
which made his dates more sweet. When he
Took off her silken veil, and breached
the sugar-casket's lock, he reached
A treasure worth much gold; he made
her yellow, with bright gold arrayed.
Yellow's the source of joy; 'tis that
makes saffroned halvi taste so sweet.
Don't look at saffron's yellow; hail
the smiles it brings. A yellow veil
Makes bright the candle's flame; the Calf
of Gold from yellow gained its worth.
Bright yellow, gold's the source of cheer;
for this is yellow ochre dear.
When Bahram heard this tale, he clasped
the maiden tightly; happy, slept.

34

How Bahram Sat on a Monday in the Green Dome:
The Tale of the Princess of the Third Clime

When Monday came, the prosperous king
raised his green parasol to the moon.
Lamp-like, in brilliant green he shone
like green-clad angels in the heavens.
Towards the emerald dome he went,
and gave his heart to merriment.
When Heaven's garden strewed starry flowers
of spring upon its emerald bowers,
He begged that cypress robed in green

to loose wise words from her sweet tongue.
That peri, bowing low, revealed
to him those secrets closely veiled:
'O you whose life makes mine rejoice
(may all lives be your sacrifice!):
Fair Fortune dwells within your tent,
and crown and throne before your gate;
The crown ennobled by your head;
the throne by your court firmly set.
Your noble lineage crowns your rule;
all men to your just court appeal.'
When she had praised the lofty throne,
her ruby lips let sweet words flow.
The Story of Bishr and How He Fell in Love.
In Rum there lived a gentle man,
as sweet as honey, pure and kind.
All virtues men should have, he owned,
and all his worth by goodness crowned.
In virtue and in wisdom, he
preferred to practise chastity.
'Bishr the abstinent' his name
among his fellows, well-earned fame!
He strolled, for pleasure's sake, one day
along a smooth and level way.
Love launched a Turkish raid on him;
temptation set his wits aspin.
A moon-like figure, darkly veiled
in cloud-like silks, his heart assailed.
Heeding him not, she passed him by;
just then a quick breeze stole away
Her veil; the breeze, temptation's guide,
that moon through its black clouds displayed.
When Bishr saw this his legs grew weak;
the straight-shot arrow found its mark.
That form, with its seductive charms,
would cast all chaste vows to the wind:
A heap of roses, cypress-straight,
her face both fair and ruddy bright;
Her languorous, bewitching glance
stole sleep from all whom it entranced.
Her lips were like the dewy rose,
whose petals nectar sweet enclose.
Her eyes, two languid lilies, held
temptation in their drowsy spell.
Beneath black locks her bright face gleamed,
like eagle's breast beneath dark plumes.
Her mole more musky than her curls;
her dark eyes yet more infidel:
Those locks, that tempting mole, did rob
the patient heart from all who saw.
Bishr cried out, unknowing, like
a child who's bitten by a snake;
And at his cry the wandering moon
made fast her fluttering veil again,
And hastening on her way, she sped,
with such a murder on her head.
When Bishr's wits returned, he found
his house in ruins, the thief long gone.
He thought, 'To follow her is wrong,
though she's brought patience to an end;
Yet only patience can begin
to heal this wound; all else is sin.
Though passion has led me astray,
I am a man; I will not die
Of grief; 'tis pious to renounce
this passion, and choose abstinence.
I'd better leave this city; turn
my face towards Jerusalem,
That God, Who knows both good and evil,
may grant me ease from this sore peril.'
He made his preparations; turned
and hastened towards the holy shrine;
From fear he fled unto his God,
and to His stern command he bowed,
That He might guard him from the devil,
and save him from temptation's evil.
When he had worshipped long, he turned
homewards, and left the holy shrine.
His company on his return,
who irked his passage like a thorn,
Was one who cavilled at all things,
and talked at length on anything.
Whatever Bishr might mention, he
would seize the bit between his teeth,
And say, 'That's so! this may be true;
no idle words on that will do.'
Bishr was dumbfounded by this talk,
like someone drugged, who's quite forgot
The art of speech. 'Come, tell me then',
the fellow said, 'your proper name.'
'This humble slave of God', he said,
'is Bishr; pray, what are you called?'
'You're Bishr, who brings bad news to men,
I'm Malikha, chief of the learned.
All that the heavens and earth comprise,
all that man's judgement can surmise,
Through perfect reason I know well;
what's lawful from what's not I tell.
I'm better than a dozen men;
in every art I'm fully learned.
Forest and river, mount, plain, sea:
all that exists 'neath the blue sky:
I know the source of each full true;
how this began, and that one grew.
I know the secrets of the sky,
although I've never reached so high.

Any event, in any region,
I see with my unfailing vision:
I know a kingdom will decline
full fifty years before the time;
If grain will yield up less or more,
I tell of it a year before.
The leech's art I know so well,
that fever's pain I can dispel.
When I employ my magic's might,
amber I turn to ruby bright.
My alchemy turns stones to gems;
base earth is gold within my hands.
The magic spells breathed from my lips
turn plaited ropes to speckled snakes.
Each treasure-mine that God has wrought,
I set its talisman at nought.
All that men seek, in Heaven or earth,
I give forth knowledge of them both.
In all abodes where learning lies,
there's none more skilled or learned than I.'
Such boasting talk gave Bishr pause;
that idle speech left him amazed.
A black cloud over the hill appeared;
when Malikha at that cloud peered,
He asked, 'Why is one cloud black as pitch,
another white as is
God's will that does such things,' Bishr said,
'as you well know. ', Malikha cried,
'Leave off! such pretexts go astray;
the arrow should strike the target; say,
Rather, the dark cloud's burning smoke;
that's rational; while that like milk,
All filled with pearls, which brings the rain,
has purest moisture mixed within.'
A wind arose, a hidden wind;
see what this know-it-all said then!
'Say, why does the wind stir? do not pass
your life confused, like ox or ass!'
Bishr answered, ' 'Tis God's will again;
nothing is done save He command.'
'Let wisdom guide you,' Malikha railed;
'how long recount such old wives' tales?
The earth produces wind, that's sure;
'tis the earth's vapours make it stir.'
He spied a lofty mountain; asked,
'Why is this grander than the rest?'
Bishr said, 'Again, 'tis God's decree
that one is low, the other high.'
'One more to proofs I am constrained:
how long this talk of Plan and Pen?
When the clouds make fierce floods pour down,
they wash the hills to lower ground;
But that whose peak is higher yet
from the flood's passage is remote.'
Bishr cried out, his brain aboil:
'Strive not so much against God's will!
It's not that I am ignorant;
I am more learned than you; and yet
None can construe things as he likes,
nor ease the way with fancy's works.
We mortals, who can't pass beyond
the veil, read the designs thereon.
To follow error is no learning;
we can't rely on such false readings.
I fear that when this veil is raised,
those who've misread will be sore tried.
'Tis better, with this high-branched tree,
the hand of all should not make free.'
Though Bishr thus exorcized him,
that garrulous demon stayed in trim.
They travelled on for several days;
that loudmouth's chatter never stayed.
In desert hot and waterless,
their brains aboil from sleeplessness,
They ran about; they wailed and screeched,
till, in that burning waste, they reached
A sturdy tree which towered high,
all fresh and green against the sky.
Beneath it, like green silk, the grass
made hot and weary eyes rejoice.
An earthen jar was buried there,
with water in it, sweet and clear.
When that boor did the water spy,
like sweetest herbs among dry clay,
He said to Bishr, 'O lucky friend,
I ask you now: say, to what end
This wide-mouthed jar of clay has been
buried in earth up to its brim?
How deep the water it contains?
No foothills here, but barren plains.'
Bishr said, 'In hope of heavenly gain,
someone's done this (many the same),
And, lest some blow should shatter it,
has buried it deep in the earth.'
Malikha scoffed, 'Oh, don't go on!
All answers of this sort are wrong.
Oh yes! men for the sake of others
bear water on their backs! What bother!
Especially in a such a place
where, from the heat, there is no trace
Of water. 'Tis a trappers' den
here, the abode of hunting men.
They've made the water of this jar
a trap; when goats, gazelle, or deer,
Or onager, eat the bitter herbs
that grow in desert wastes, and thirst,

They, seeking water in this waste,
will hasten to this watering-place.
The hunter, having barred the way,
bow drawn, lies waiting for his prey,
And as it drinks, will strike it dead,
and roast the wounded game for food.
Thus do you solve all mysteries,
that all who hear may utter praise!'
Said Bishr, 'O you who can discern
the secrets of the world: each man
Has his own view: both of us scan,
within each person, what within
Ourselves we bear. Do not think ill
of things beforehand, lest after all
Ill thoughts may evil ends bring forth.'
When by that pool they ate and drank,
Water indeed for the thirsting meet,
so pure and cold, so clean and sweet,
Malikha shouted suddenly,
'Get up; move off a little way,
That I may dive into that pool,
and cleanse my limbs in water cool.
These salty rivulets of sweat
have sullied me from head to foot.
I'll wash this dirt off of my limbs,
and set out fresh and clean again;
Then shatter this jar with a stone,
and save wild beasts from further harm.'
Bishr said, 'You fool! Abandon that;
don't stain the water in this vat!
With joy you've drunken deep of it;
why soil it with your body's dirt?
He that's drunk deep of water sweet
does not spit in it. Mirrors can't
Be cleansed with vinegar; nor do
men taint pure wine with dregs. So you
Must leave it, that if someone comes
here thirsting, it may succour him.'
That erring man heard not his words;
his evil nature now appeared.
He stripped, and bundled up his clothes;
bending, into the jar he dove.
But lo! 'twas no jar, but a well
whose watery depths he could not tell.
He could not argue with his death;
he struggled much, but was not saved.
He flailed about, much water drank,
but in the end was drowned and sank.
Bishr sat apart; wept bitter tears
for that pure water. 'See once more
How this crude, ill-begotten lout
has turned my friendly words to nought.
I fear this dirty-natured churl
will bring pollution to the pool;
Stain its pure water with his dirt,
then with a stone shatter the vat.
Such evil-thinking comes from those
who're evil, not the pure and wise.
May all be spared from such a friend;
may such a base man only drown!'
Thus to himself he mused; and when
a long time passed, and still the man
Did not appear, he went to find
him, unaware that he had drowned.
He saw the drowned man, cold and dead,
his empty head on the jar's edge.
He stood amazed, what could this be?,
then seized a branch of that stout tree,
And, like the sharp head of a spear,
with hands and nails he stripped it bare;
Then like one who surveys the sea,
lowered it down, the depths to see.
No jar was there! he found a well
built up with bricks, too deep to tell,
With half a jar on top of it,
that wild beasts might not swim in it.
He pulled the drowned man out; transferred
him from his watery grave to earth,
And, covering him with dirt and stones,
he sat above the grave and mourned:
'Where now your cleverness and wit?
Those tools with which you loosened knots?
Where all your claims to artful schemes
with beast and div, peri and man?
You said, "I'll catch within a snare
the secrets of the seven spheres."
Where's that claim to a dozen arts,
that manliness, O unmanned corpse?
You boasted, "My quick wits foretell
all matters that the future holds. "
But when a pit appeared before
your eyes, what could your foresight do?
And what of all those things we said
about this water: good or bad,
Though our opinions had some worth,
neither of us hit on the truth.
All that we guessed, each in his turn,
kindled a fire in which we burned.
That Plan was of a different sort;
not you nor I could reckon it.
Its thread was knotted by the sphere;
no one could find its end. Whatever
We said about that Plan was wrong;
mistaken so, now you have drowned,
And I escaped; for you forgot
your debt to God, but I did not,

You thought it was a hunter's snare,
and like a beast were trapped in there;
While I, in goodness, thought it good,
was right, and so my life was saved.'
He said these words, then rose and sought
Malikha's things from left and right,
Gathered them all up one by one:
his Egyptian stuffs, his linen turban.
When he opened the seal of his box of clothes,
a purse fell out from among their folds,
With a thousand coins of Egyptian gold,
sound ancient coins from days of old.
He replaced the seal, stilled his desire,
and left it sealed up as before.
He said, 'I must collect his clothes,
his turban, ornaments, and gold,
And keep them safe until I can
deliver them unto his kin.
I'll ask about the place wherein
he dwelt, and give them to his kin.
Although I could not give him aid,
I'll not betray his trust,' he said.
'If I should do as he has done,
my fate and his should be the same.'
He travelled till he reached the town,
and saw his family and kin.
When he had rested some days there,
enjoying sleep and decent fare,
He showed that turban all around,
in hopes its owner might be found.
A worthy man, who knew it, said,
'From where you are, walk on a bit:
In such a quarter, you will spy,
seventh house, a kingly mansion high.
Knock at the door, for it is his;
doubt not that that man's house it is.'
Bishr, with turban, clothes, and gold,
went to the house that he was told.
He knocked; a sweet-lipped lady came,
and opened up the door to him.
'Tell me your business and your need,
that I may do what is required.'
Bishr said, 'With me I have some goods;
where is the lady of the house?
Permit me to come in, and tell
a truthful tale, of what befell
Malikha; what Fate brought upon
that Heaven of learning, with its games.'
The woman brought him in, and bade
him rest upon a cushioned seat.
She, her face veiled, then asked him to
tell the whole tale, and tell it true.
Bishr told the details, one by one,
to her of moon face, silvery limbs:
How they fell into company;
how Malikha his acts displayed;
How, like a drunk, he grew inflamed,
and on all subjects made great claims;
Would think the worst of everything,
and every good with badness stain;
How he for others dug a pit;
how he himself fell into it.
How, like the billowing sea, he foamed
with boasts, and in the end was drowned.
When he'd recounted what he'd seen
and learned about that godless man,
He said, 'He's drowned (may you live long!);
his place the earth, your place this home.
His corpse, by water washed, I gave
unto earth's treasure-house, the grave.
I gathered his belongings and
now have them here within my hand.'
At once the clothes and gold he lay
before her; showed his honesty.
The woman, worldly-wise and rare,
perused his page and read it clear.
A while distracted by that speech,
she wept a bit; and when she ceased,
Said, 'You, of kingly acumen,
God's servant, and an upright man:
Blessings upon your lawful birth,
your gentleness and honest worth.
Who'd ever show such chivalry
as you have done, to helpless me?
The righteous man is not the thief
who steals from bees their honey sweet;
For he whose deeds are truly good,
is he who's not deceived by gold.
Malikha's dead and laid to rest;
his soul's gone to what place is best.
And what you said: that he approved
of nought, was true a thousandfold.
His deeds were nought but tyranny,
and faithlessness and cruelty.
Women and men he wrongly served,
and what he got he well deserved.
A rancorous Jew in his belief,
unholy dragon, subtle snake:
Long years I suffered at his hands,
and nought but evil did I gain.
While I was by soft words misled,
he forged about me lies. I spread
A shield, like mist, against his wind
and his sharp sword, like lightning drawn.
Since God has driven him from me,
I'm freed from his calamity.

Now, good or bad, he's disappeared;
one should not speak ill of the dead.
He's vanished from our midst; and now
all between us is changed; for you,
Who showed concern for my affairs,
I choose as husband. I have here
Both wealth and land, and beauty chaste:
where will you find a better mate?
Now, for that wedding God's decreed,
go order my affairs with speed.
I'll have you as my spouse, for I
have seen your boundless chivalry.
If you will have me, let me claim
to be your slave. The story's done;
Here's how things lie; with wealth I'm blessed,
and now you'll see my beauteous face.'
So saying, she unveiled her moon;
unsealed her moist carnelian.
When Bishr her lovely face espied,
her magic mole, her tempting eyes,
It was that fairy-face he'd seen
that first day, world-illumining.
He cried out as he swooned away,
the slave of her who was his slave.
That sweet-lipped one, on seeing this,
quickly brought scent, restored his wits.
The senseless man, revived, blushed red
with burning shame. 'If I', he said,
'Seem by a peri's love distraught,
think not that I'm by demons caught.
Who sees a demon dies; but I
have seen a lady born of fays.
The love you see's not born anew
today; for long I've burned for you.
On such a path, on such a day,
the rude wind snatched your veil away.
I saw you; lost control; without
the wine of union, I was drunk.
I burned for you in secret grief;
for love of you lost hope of life.
Though you were never absent from
my thoughts, I would reveal to none
My secret; then, my patience spent,
I fled; towards God my footsteps bent,
Till He, with grace and mercy, caused
all my desires to come to pass.
Since I, like sensual men, did not
covet another's lawful wife,
Fortune, which wealth and beauty gave,
brought not forbidden, but lawful trove.'
When his true love the lady saw,
her own desire grew ten times more.
She treated him with love and care;
he went and ordered the affair.
The bride-price settled, they were joined;
he gave thanks for that blessing found.
His fay-like lady he enjoyed,
and made spells 'gainst the Evil Eye.
Thus from a Jew he saved a queen,
and rescued from eclipse a moon.
He washed the yellow from her silks;
green jasmine leaves grew in their place.
Since like an angel she did seem,
he sewed a dress of heavenly green.

Better than yellow robes are green,
green well befits the cypress' form.
Green is the field of healthy corn;
in green the angels are adorned.
Green, above ali, is the soul's choice;
green verdure makes the eyes rejoice.
The growing plants are green of hue;
green is the colour of all that grows.
Her story done, the king embraced
that moon whose beauty graced his feast.
35.
How Bahram Sat on a Tuesday in the Red Dome: The Tale of the Princess of the Fourth Clime.
One dark and dull December day
(short as the nights are in July),
A day which other days outstrips,
Tuesday, the navel of the week,
The day of Mars, of martial hue,
Bahram, of both the namesake true,
Adorned himself in red on red;
at dawn to the red dome he sped.
The ruddy-cheeked fair Slav princess,
flame-hued, with water's gentleness,
Prepared herself to serve; that moon
is pleasing which adores the sun.
When night raised up its standard dark,
and rent the veil of the sun's vault,
The king a pleasant tale did seek
from that fair maid with apple cheeks.
That lovely did not disobey;
poured pearls from ruby lips, to say:
'O you before whose court the sphere
is threshold, the sun's disk your fair
Consort; than any pearl that's bored
more precious; better than any word
Can say; none can approach your state:
may he be blind who's blind to that!'
When she had thus her homage given,
she brought pure rubies to the mine.
The Tale of the Princess Guarded in the Castle.
In Russia's far-off lands (she said),
there was a city, like a bride,

Made prosperous by its king, who had
a daughter reared with love; a maid
Tall as the cypress, rosy-faced,
seductive, with enchanting eyes.
Her beauteous face the moon outstripped;
sweeter than sugar were her lips.
Her suitors all were dazed with awe;
sugar and candles to her bowed.
Her sweet, small mouth made sugar less
than the slim circle of her waist.
Musk envied her dark locks; the rose
was by her basil sweet brought low.
Her fresh face sweeter than the spring;
fairer than idols' her colouring.
The narcissus langourous for her love;
the beauteous eglantine her slave.
Her stature like the cypress straight,
her face than any lamp more bright.
Rose-water kissed her feet; the rose
girded itself her slaves to serve.
Her beauty and sweet smile apart,
she wore the ornament of art.
She'd every mode of wisdom learned;
of every art a page had turned;
Perused all books of magic; read
of sorcery and all things hid.
Her face with her dark locks she'd veiled,
at plans to marry had rebelled.
How can one peerless in her time
agree to wed? And when her fame
Had spread throughout the world, that from
far Paradise a houried come;
The sun and moon had born a child;
Venus had given her Mercury's milk,
Each one's desire for her was warmed;
from each side soft entreaties came.
One strove with gold, and one with might;
but she her gold with strength did hide.
Her father, from those suitors famed
(from whom that fair withheld esteem),
Was helpless: What to do? How play
nard with a hundred adversaries?
That lovely, solitary maid,
seeing her suitors thus arrayed,
Sought out a mountain, towering high,
as far from harm as the turning sky.
She ordered built a mighty fort,
as if a mountain had sprung forth
From deep within that mountain's heart;
asked leave, and readied to depart.
Her loving father, though he grieved
at her remoteness, gave his leave,
That, honey-like, the hive once left,
bees would not swarm through door and roof.
When treasure's in a fortress kept,
the watchman will not fear its theft.
That strong-held beauty, for her ease,
ordered her fortress's affairs.
When it was strongly fortified,
she, like a treasure, dwelt inside.
So settled, she of silvery limbs
'The Lady of the Fort' was named.
That iron keep all thieves did thwart,
a fortress like the Brazen Fort.
She, like a Slav princess, therein;
no fort of such a one ever dreamed.
She'd barred the way to all who came,
and thwarted those who'd pleasure gain.
In every art that skilful maid
was clever, quick of thought; she'd read
The temper of the starry sphere,
and all the elements compared.
Of nature's elements fourfold
their mysteries she all controlled:
With wet and dry what might be wrought;
how fire grows cold and water hot.
What are the qualities of men,
and how the stars may work on them.
Whatever learning useful finds,
and gives assistance to mankind,
She all encompassed, she in form
a woman, but in essence, man.
Patient, she ordered her design;
divorced her heart from all mankind.
Upon the road, from clever plan,
she set up several talismans.
Of iron and stone the form of each,
each holding in its hand a mace.
All those who trod that fearsome path
were severed by those blades in half.
Helpless all travellers on that road,
except for one, the fortress' guard;
And even he, who knew the way,
would count his paces carefully:
If of a hundred one was out,
his head would have been swiftly cut
By one of those machines' sharp blades;
his life's bright moon eclipsed by clouds.
The gate of that sky-scraping fort
was well concealed, like Heaven's gate.
A builder in a month would never
have found it, more than Heaven's door.
That fortress-dwelling maid knew well
the Chinese temple-painters' skill;
Designing with her pen, she drew
pictures as fair and fresh as pearls.

With pen as black as houri's locks
she painted shadow upon light.
When in that tower she made her home,
the tower found favour from her moon.
She took her brush and drew upon
a piece of silk her own fair form,
From head to foot; and over it
she wrote, in finely crafted script:
'Tell him who would possess me (girt
by such a fort) that, like the moth
Which gazes at the light, he dare
to enter; not speak from afar.
A true man can this stronghold gain;
the unmanly cannot pass therein.
He who desires this prey must have
not one life, but a thousand lives;
Must tread the road with firm resolve,
and four conditions, tests, must solve.
The first condition is his good
repute, and beauty, if he would
Wed me. The second test is that
he loose these talismans by wit
And judgement; and the third, that when
he's broken all the talismans,
He must reveal the fortress gate;
by door, not roof, must be my mate.
If this condition be fulfilled,
let him go to the city, till
I come there, to my father's court,
and question him on every art.
If he gives answers fitting, I
will be his wife, most loyally;
That worthy man alone I'll wed
who can accomplish all I've said.
But he who fails these tests, his blood
will surely be on his own head.
He who fulfils them will possess
the elixir of happiness;
But he who does not heed them, though
he noble be, will be brought low.'
When she had finished with that page
she gave it to a messenger; said,
'Arise; go now, and take this sheet;
remove the cover from this plate.
Go up beside the city gate;
fasten the sheet to the gate's vault,
That all who wish a bride like me
(though citizen or soldier he)
May set out, this bold aim to try:
to be the fortress' lord, or die.'
The messenger departed; passed
through twisting ways; above the gate
He fixed the portrait of that moon,
that lovers might regard it, and
That whoso wished might rise, and shed
with his own hand his precious blood.
And when, to every crowned head
enthroned, word of this tale had spread,
Men came from everywhere to hear
more of that tale that sparked desire.
Each one, by youth and ardour driven,
did cast his life upon the wind.
Those who set out towards that maid
reaped but destruction from those blades.
No striver's wit nor clever plans
could loose the castle's talismans;
And though one might display some wit,
his spells at last fell short of it:
Though he some talismans might best,
he could not overcome the rest.
His ignorance and lack of sense
made plain his failure in the end.
Thus failing to attain their goal,
some fine youths perished. None at all
Escaped that deadly path; along
it lay the forms of headless men.
Each of those severed heads was set
up high atop the city gate,
Until so many had been cut
that head on head was piled up.
Throughout the world, wherever you look,
nothing but walls do cities deck;
That peri-face, that houri cruel,
adorned the town with heads, not walls.
How many heads rose high above
her gate, not having reached its shade!
There was, of noble, princely race,
a highborn youth of comely face,
Clever and strong, courageous, true;
both lions and onagers he slew.
He passed the town one day, intent
on hunting, that like spring he might
Bloom fresh; that honeyed sheet saw on
the gate, with flasks of poison round:
A portrait on black silk; a form
which pleased the eye and the heart charmed.
A face so lovely and so fair,
it stole his patience quite away.
'Praise be', he said, 'upon that pen
from whose tip comes this fair design.'
Around that portrait lay, from head
to foot, a hundred heads. He said,
'This pearl that's round a shark's neck hung:
how shall I flee it? I'm undone,
Should I renounce this tale of love,
'twill shatter all my fortitude.

Yet if this passion does not leave
my heart, still hot, I'll lose my head.
Though that silk bears a lovely form,
dragons guard treasures, dates have thorns.
So many heads have fallen in
that game; would something had been gained!
Say mine is cut off too: what gain?
An earth-born man the earth will stain.
If I do not let go this thread,
'twill bind and sever my own head;
But if I'm bold in facing death,
how can I bid farewell to life?'
Again he thought: 'This painted silk,
that suitors charms, is fairies' work.
Against the spell of such a fay,
save magic's charms, there is no way.
Till I that fairy's spells can best,
let me not act with undue haste.
I need a plan, not small, but great,
my sheep from the wolf's jaws to save.
Whoever some hard task assays,
his plans may often go astray;
In such a task, do not think small,
that a great loss may not befall.
Dance to the tune the world plays; take
things lightly, give back hard. My heart
Is more distressed than is my mind,
my fear outstrips my pain, I find;
How can I then, with this heart, find
joy; and how think with such a mind?'
He spoke; for a few moments grieved;
then a few bitter sighs he heaved.
That sight brought tears; he saw the mat,
the head, the basin, and the blade.
He hid his passion in his heart;
his secret musings would impart
To none. Each dawn, when he with great
desire, passed by the city gate,
He saw that novelty portrayed:
a Shirin's castle, Farhad's grave.
He tried that lock with hundred keys,
but the thread's end escaped his eyes.
It bore a hundred thousand heads,
but none could tell him of its end.
Although to every side he sped,
he could not loose that tangled thread.
In every realm a way he sought
to smooth the strands of that tight knot.
In this he put aside his pride,
and sought a cure; until he heard
News of a learned man, who bound
foul demons, joined with fairies; tamed
Each science's rebellious steed,
and mastered every art; outstripped
His fellows; opened every door
to others closed. When that youth heard,
From travellers worldly-wise, about
this world of knowledge, he set out
Towards that glorious Simurgh;
from mount to mount flew like a bird.
He found him, like a garden fair
and blooming, in a ruined cave,
And lily-like before him bowed;
prepared to serve him like the rose.
His smiling fortune then ordained
that from that Khizr he obtained
Much knowledge. When he'd drunken well
from that spring, he his secret told:
Of that fair one, her fortress, and
the harm she'd done to many men;
That talisman fixed on her road;
that cutting of a thousand heads.
He told all to the sage; nothing
concealed. From secret reckoning,
The sage revealed to him all that
might be of use. When he who sought
Had found the answer from that sage,
with thousand thanks, he went away
Back to the city; rested there
some days, and thought on that affair.
The means to try that narrow road,
all he required, he found; then sought
A spiritual connection that
would render easy what was hard.
Thus reckoning, he made a plan
to deal with every talisman.
First, for that quest, he sought the help
of men of staunchness and resolve.
Since this was bloody work (he said),
the cruel sphere's game, he dressed in red,
And entered in that sea of blood,
with (like his tears) a blood-red robe.
He thought not of himself; but men
set up a cry, reproaching him.
'I strive not for myself,' he said,
'but to avenge a thousand heads.
I'll lift this deadly yoke from them,
or lose my head in the attempt.'
When he had dipped his robe in blood,
he pitched his tent, and grasped his sword.
Whoever heard of his intent,
that lion-heart on vengeance bent,
To that endeavour added his
resolve, that he might soon succeed.
Their firm resolve, his shining will,
protected him like iron mail.

He then, apologizing, sought
the king's permission to depart;
The road to the high fortress took,
and set about his well-planned work.
When he came near each talisman,
he breathed a spell which was its doom.
He shattered all its magic dire;
deprived it of its baneful power.
With force, each talisman he met
he cast down to the earth; and left
The mountain top free from their doom;
no talisman remained thereon.
He neared the gate, and with a thong
of leather, beat upon a drum.
All round the walls he sought its sound;
heard it and dug; a tunnel found;
And when his echoing drum disclosed
a breach, a door appeared above.
On learning this, that tented moon
dispatched a slave, who said to him,
'You who close tunnels, open ways,
whom Fortune's guided to this place:
When you first loosed the talismans
you found the treasure's door. Now turn
Towards the city, like the stream;
be patient two days, if you can,
Till I come to my father there
and test your skill. I'll ask you four
Deep mysteries; if you reply
correctly to these secrets, I
In love for you will be complete,
and nought our marriage will impede.'
That hero, seeing his success,
turned back, but forward still advanced.
When from the fort he came to town,
he took that silken banner down,
Folded it, gave it to a slave;
affliction perished, praise revived.
By force he cut down all the heads
atop the gate; unbound them; gave
Them to the people; praising him,
with those slain forms they buried them.
Much praised, he 'then went to his home,
a minstrel summoned, brought forth song.
On him the citizens rained coins;
his house with finest silks adorned.
Each swore an oath; said, 'If the king
does not approve this marriage, then
We'll overthrow him swiftly; make
you prince and king; for he did take
Our heads, and was cold to our plight;
you saved us, with your manly might.'
Meanwhile, that lovely bride was pleased
with her mate's suit. When night released
Black musk, and rubbed it over the moon's
pavilion, she, within her own,
Rejoiced. Anon the moon's bright rays
then drew her litter by strait ways
Unto the palace; when she came,
the palace radiant splendour gained.
Her father's face bloomed at her sight;
his daughter did not hide her state,
But of events, both good and ill,
that had befallen, told him all:
Those horsemen she'd unhorsed; that pit
they'd dug, and fallen into it;
Those lions who spoke her name, and died,
helpless, before her; till the day
That princely scion lost his heart
to her in but a moment; sought
To gain her; like a mountain firm
stood fast, and shattered one by one
The talismans; the fortress breached,
and shrank from no condition set.
'Now that he's passed three of my tests,
how will he meet the fourth?' she asked.
'What is the fourth?' the king replied;
'Conditions for brave men are made
But one, not twenty.' 'I shall set
four knotty problems as a test.
Should he solve them (Fortune his guide),
I'll place a crown upon his head;
But if his ass should lamely go
along this path, there where he knows
He'll pitch his tent. Tomorrow at dawn
the king must sit upon his throne,
And summon him to be his guest;
I, by the curtain veiled, will ask
Of him the secret mysteries,
that, after thought, he may reply.'
'I'll do so,' said the king; 'your deed
is mine as well; I give my leave.'
They spoke no more, but went away
and sought their rest. On the next day,
When over the rocks the turquoise sphere
blew ruby dust, and lit the earth,
The king, to Fortune's service girt,
arrayed a stately royal court;
Assembled many famous men,
right-speaking and right-acting; then
Summoned the prince to be his guest,
and scattered jewels upon his head.
A golden tray was brought, which filled
the palace with its groaning load.
It bore so many wondrous dishes,
it seemed a very hoard of wishes.

Of that fine fare on every side,
each man ate all that he desired.
When all had eaten of that hoard,
their natures were once more restored.
The king commanded then that they,
in private, that pure gold assay.
He went and sat in his own place
(the guest in his), so that he faced
His daughter, as he wished to see
what game she'd with her suitor play.
She (who'd put Taraz maids to shame)
behind the curtain played her game;
Two tiny pearls loosed from her ear,
and gave them to a treasurer:
'Go, quickly take these to our guest,
and swiftly bring his answer back.'
The messenger made haste; bowed low,
and to the guest those fair pearls showed.
He weighed the tiny pearls with care
and to their measure added more:
Of pearls which equalled them in worth
he added three; then gave them to
The messenger, who sped with them
back to that noble lady. When
That stony-hearted maid looked on
the five pearls, she took up a stone
And weighed them; found them equal; then
crushed them like dust with that same stone.
She added sugar to them; ground
the whole together; then returned
Them to the guest, who once again
perceived the secret they contained.
He asked the servant for a cup
of milk; scattered both into it.
'Take it,' said he; the servant sped;
that gift before her mistress laid.
The lady quaffed the milk, and then
she made a paste of what remained.
She weighed it to the former weight;
it differed from it not a whit.
She took a ring from off her hand
and sent it to him. That wise man
Took it; on his own finger wore
that precious ring, and held it dear.
A single world-illuming pearl,
night's lamp, day-bright, he gave the girl;
That houri-maid returned, and brought
the single pearl to the ruby bright.
The lady placed it in her palm;
unstrung her necklace, till she found
A matching pearl, of lustre bright,
just like it, which lit up the night.
She strung together both the pearls,
each like, no more nor less. The girl
Those pearls then to the sea returned,
nay, gave the Pleiads to the sun.
The wise man looked on them, and found
no difference in those two pearls joined.
Except for being two, they gleamed
with the same light and lustrous sheen.
He asked the servants for a bead
of blue; for there could be no third
To those two pearls. The bead he joined
to them, and sent them back again.
When his love saw both bead and pearls,
she sealed her lips and sweetly smiled.
Sagely, she took them back, and bound
pearls in her ears, the bead upon
Her hand. She told her father, 'Rise;
prepare; for I am satisfied.
See how my fortune is my friend,
that such a mate should come to hand.
I've gained a mate whose peer's not found
in his own realm. Although I am
Learned, and learning love, less wise
am I than he.' Then, at the grace
Of that sweet tale, her father said,
'Those mysteries, O angelic maid,
Those questions and replies I've heard,
were all beneath a veil obscured.
The secrets of that colloquy
you must reveal in full to me.'
With thousand charms that fine-reared maid
the symbols' secret sense displayed.
'When I first set my mind to work,
I loosed the pearls from my ears.
By their exemplar I did say,
"Know that this life is but two days."
He, adding three to two, replied,
"It passes quick, though it were five."
I, adding to the pearls some sugar,
and grinding them to dust together,
Said, "This life with desire is mixed,
like pearls and sugar mingled thus;
Who, by spells or by alchemy,
can separate the two?" Then he,
Who poured the milk therein, so one
dissolved, the other one remained,
Said, "Sugar mixed with pearls will melt,
and vanish with a drop of milk."
In drinking sugar from his cup,
I signed to him that I was but
A nursling to him; sent the ring,
consenting to be wed to him.
He gave me back that pearl to say,
"Like this, you'll find no mate for me."

Joining my pearl to his, I showed
that I in truth his equal was.
When he, examining those pearls,
saw no third like them in the world,
He found a blue bead; put it by
those two, against the Evil Eye.
When I put on that bead, I meant
thereby, the seal of my consent:
Upon my breast his seal of love
is that which guards my treasure-hoard.
Because of those five mysteries,
I bowed before his mastery.'
When the king saw that wild colt tamed
by wisdom's whip, he then arranged
(According to the marriage rites)
what was required, in finest wise.
Then, at her bridal feast, he joined
Venus and Canopus in bond;
Arrayed a Paradisal feast,
perfumed with musk and aloes sweet;
Adorned the marriage feast; the rose
and cypress seated, then arose.
The happy pair he did entrust
to love; departed from their midst.
The ruby-miner gained the mine,
and from his love assistance found:
Now kissed her cheeks and now her lips;
now tasted pomegranates, now dates;
The pearl by diamond pierced at last,
the hawk lit on the pheasant's breast.
Upon her hand he saw his bead;
her languorous eyes her love betrayed.
He did not leave her jewel's seal,
but from her treasure took the pearl.
In love and joy they lived; he made
his garment, like her bright cheeks, red;
Since, that first day, for luck, he'd taken
red robes as an auspicious sign,
And by that red from black escaped,
he always dressed himself in red.
Since red had brought to him his fame,
the King of Red became his name.
Red, wondrous, novel hue! bestows
upon red gems their value. Gold,
Which some do call red sulphur, boasts
of red, its attribute foremost.
Blood, with the vital spirit mixed,
is red because it has life's grace.
In those in whom you'd beauty find,
a ruddy hue is beauty's sign.
The rose would not the garden rule
if it were not bright red in hue.
When this fine tale was ended, and
the air was filled with roses' scent,
From scattered roses, King Bahram
glowed ruddy as the fragrant wine.
He gave his hand to that red rose;
embraced her; slept in sweet repose.
36.
How Bahram Sat on a Wednesday in the Turquoise Dome: The Tale of the Princess of the Fifth Clime.
One Wednesday when the blooming sun
suffused with blue the sphere's black dome,
The king, victorious as the sun,
bright sky-like robes of turquoise donned,
Went to the turquoise dome for sport;
the tale was long, the day was short.
When night put on its veil of musk,
the king dismissed his watchmen; asked
That story-telling lady to
perform her duties as was due,
And tell him, lovingly, a tale
to please him. Thus that cypress tall
Opened her rosy lips, and poured
on rose-petals her sugared words.
She said, 'O you whom Heaven obeys,
fortunate Jupiter sings your praise.
I, and a thousand better, are
ennobled through your service. 'Twere,
Before the source of honey, base
to sell sour vinegar; but since
None can escape the king's command,
I'll speak, if he can bear the pain.'
The Story of Mahan and What Befell Him.
In Egypt dwelt a man, Mahan,
more beautiful than the full moon.
Like Egypt's Joseph, fair of face;
a thousand Turks his Hindu slaves.
His friends, companions of his age,
took Pleasure at his sight. Some days,
beneath the azure sphere, with song
and pleasant games, they sported long.
Each, for that bright lamp's happy sake,
in house and garden held a feast.
A noble man, not small but great,
once in his garden made him guest;
A beautiful and pleasant bower,
the friends a hundred times more fair.
Till nightfall they rejoiced therein,
now savouring fruits, now drinking wine;
Each moment some new sport enjoyed;
each moment relished some new food.
When night its musky banner raised,
drew pitch-black lines on silver, they
Took pleasure in that garden, wine
in hand, and in their stories, song.
They to that garden pledged their hearts;

tasted new pleasures, fresh delights.
The moon's bright glow lit up the sky;
truly the night was bright as day.
When Mahan's brain grew hot with wine,
he saw the brilliant moon, and round
That garden like a drunkard ran;
from verdure to a date-grove went.
He saw from quite some distance loom
a figure who seemed known to him.
It was indeed a friend, in trade
and wealth his partner. 'Why', he said,
'Have you come at this hour, without
companion, even slave, about?'
'From far away I've come this night,
my heart impatient for your sight.
I've brought immeasurable gain,
such profit as your thanks will earn.
'Twas late when I arrived in town;
the gates were closed; I'd no way home.
But when I heard you feasted here,
I came; 'tis simple to return.
You'd better come to town; therein
a village chief his welfare finds.
Then too, perhaps, in dark of night,
we'll hide one half our gain from sight.'
Mahan, gladdened by thoughts of wealth,
followed his friend. With cunning stealth
They opened the garden gate; since none
saw them, no one said anything.
They ran, swift as the wind in flight,
through several watches of the night.
The fleeter partner went ahead;
Mahan behind like his dust sped.
When they had gone beyond the place
the house should be, thought's arrow missed
Its mark. 'From our home to the Nile',
thought Mahan, 'it is but a mile;
But we more than four leagues have gone,
and passed the encircling walls of town.'
Again he thought, 'Perhaps I've formed
a false impression, being drunk;
He who assists by guiding me
is sober, and must know the way.'
So they ran on; the one who led
went swiftly, while the other lagged.
Though he who followed fell behind,
the leader often called to him.
Nor did the two cease their swift flight
till cock-crow marked the end of night.
When dawn's bird spread its wings, night's brain
was emptied of its fancies vain.
The eyes of that deluded man
were freed from fancy's falsehoods then.
Mahan's friend vanished from his sight;
Mahan, now lost, became distraught.
Exhausted, drunken, brain besot,
he laid him down upon the spot;
Like half-burnt candles showered down
hot tears, and lay there until noon.
When, from the sun's hot blaze, his head
grew hotter than his burning dread,
He opened his eyes to see the road,
and looked around himself. He sought
A rose garden; no flower found,
only a heart with a thousand brands.
Cave upon cave his stopping-place;
greater than dragons were their snakes.
Although his legs were failing, yet
he thought that to go on was best.
With no strength in his legs, he ran;
without a guide he travelled on.
Until the king of night displayed
his whipping post, he was afraid
Of his own shadow. When night drew
its black design, and whiteness flew
From day, he swooned before a cave,
each plant a serpent to his gaze.
Senseless, he lay in that abode
of demons; suddenly voices heard,
Opened his eyes, and saw two forms,
one of a woman, one a man,
Each with a bundle on his back,
travelling slowly 'neath their weight.
When the man saw him on the road,
he stopped the woman, advanced, and said,
'Hey, who are you? With whom (like the wind)
are you related? Who your kin?'
'I am a stranger, gone astray;
my name, Mahan the clever.' 'Say,
How did you come upon this place,
this ruin without human trace?
These lands are demons' country; lions
roar at their clamour.' 'Worthy man,
For God's sake, I entreat you, deal
with manliness; hear my appeal.
This place myself I did not find.
Demon? Leave off I'm human kind!
Last night I was free of all care,
a guest in Iram's garden fair.
A man appeared; said, "I'm your friend,
your partner in great wealth and gain."
He cast me from that Paradise
into this ruin, and left my sight.
I know not if that empty friend
but made an error, or has sinned.
Act manfully with me, I pray;

for God's sake, show me my lost way.'
The man replied, 'O handsome youth,
you've escaped grief by a hair's breadth.
A demon he, that you call man:
"Hayil of desert wastes," his name.
He who feigned partnership: his goal
was your destruction, not your weal.
Hundreds like you he's led astray;
each perished in some narrow way.
I and this woman are your friends;
tonight we'll keep you safe from harm.
Make your heart strong, and walk with us;
swerve not from every step and pace.'
Mahan set off between those guides,
mile after mile, with lengthy strides.
They spoke no word till break of day,
trod only in each other's way.
When cock-crow beat its tabor, and dawn
tied on its camel a golden drum,
Those two, now locks without a key,
vanished from sight quite utterly.
Again Mahan collapsed and lay,
exhausted, where he fell. When day
Reflected back the sun's hot light,
and earth affirmed the death of night,
He wandered through those strait defiles,
the lair of leopards, hill on hill.
From lack of food his strength soon failed,
his nurture nought but sore travail.
He sought for roots or seeds, and ate
them bit by bit, instead of bread.
He dared not leave the road; and when
there was no road, he still went on.
Till night he walked from hill to hill,
sick of the world and sick of soul.
When the white world had turned to black,
the weary traveller ceased to walk.
Hiding from beasts, he quickly crept
into a cave, and fitful slept.
Suddenly he heard hoofbeats; spied
a horseman hurtling down the road,
Whose mount, all lathered, hotly sped;
another by the rein he led.
The rider, nearing Mahan, saw
a figure crouching in the rocks.
He spurred his mount ahead; it seemed
the flesh was bitten by its reins.
He said, 'O skulking wanderer, who
are you; what place is this for you?
Tell me your secret, lest instead
I separate you from your head.'
Mahan fell trembling in his fright,
and cast his seed, as farmers might:
'O stately traveller,' said he,
'hear out your servant's tale, I pray.'
All that he knew, both hid and clear,
he poured into that listening ear.
The horseman, when that tale he'd heard,
in wonder bit his hand, then said,
'Recite Li for you've escaped
destruction by two demons. They,
Woman and man, are clever ghouls,
who lead men from their path, and hurl
Them into pits, then shed their blood,
and flee at cock-crow. She is named
Hayla, he Ghayla; and they seek
but evil and great harm to wreak.
Give thanks that you've escaped their harm;
be quick, if you're a worthy man:
Ride my spare mount; come, seize its reins,
and from all speech your tongue restrain,
But ride behind me like the wind;
entreat God in your heart.' Alone
And helpless, Mahan left the cave,
and, mounted on that fleet-foot steed,
Spurred it so swiftly that the wind
was left behind. When they had gone
A little way, and had traversed
the dangerous mountains, there appeared
At the hills' base a level plain,
as flat as what? the palm of a hand.
From every side came sweet lute-tones,
the barbut's wail, the moan of strings,
One side cajoling, 'Come this way,'
the other, 'Here; drink wine today!'
In place of grass and flowers, the plain
held ghoul-filled pandemonium:
Demons whose clamour laid to waste
the mountain, raised amount of dust.
Thousands of demons milled about
and filled the plain with cries and shouts;
They seemed dust-scattering dust-devils; nay,
like leeches, black and long were they.
At last, on every side, their cry
raised a great uproar to the sky.
They clapped and danced: a fierce turmoil
that set brains in their skulls aboil.
Louder and louder grew their shrieks,
each moment reaching some new peak.
A while thus passed; then, from afar,
a thousand brilliant torches neared,
And several giant forms drew nigh,
monstrous and fearsome, looming high;
All of them thick-lipped like blacks,
with pitchy robes and tarry caps,
With trunks and horns, so that they seemed

both elephant and ox conjoined.
Gruesome and ugly, each one held
a flame, drunk like the guards of Hell.
Flames shot forth from their throats like tongues;
they clattered horns and blades, and sang.
The whole world fell to dancing from
the bells they brought to noisy sound.
Then Mahan's horse began to dance
coquettishly, with skittish prance.
Mahan looked at it, marvelling:
why had his horse's hoofs grown wings?
Beneath himself a trial he spied,
for on a dragon he did ride:
A four-legged dragon, with two wings,
and seven heads, a wondrous thing!
Who's seen a four-winged quadruped,
nay, worse, a dragon with seven heads?
The sphere, a belt which binds us tight,
a seven-headed dragon's height!
Astride that Hellish dragon's back,
he gripped his legs tight round its neck.
And that cruel, playful demon each
moment would play him some new trick.
It stamped and twisted, writhed and roiled,
more twisting than a lasso's coils.
Like debris from a tree brought down
by floods from mountain slopes, Mahan
Was tossed and borne from side to side,
exhausted by that shattering ride.
Drunken, it bore him up and down,
now high, now low; tossed him one time
Up like a ball, then bounced him back
to ride, affrighted, on its neck.
It played a thousand tricks upon
Mahan, till the cock crowed at dawn.
When dawn exhaled its lion's breath,
it cast Mahan down to the earth,
Then sped away; the world grew still;
that blackened pot had ceased to boil.
The demon-rider fell to earth
and swooned like one who's demon-struck.
He lay there senseless in the road,
like one exhausted, nay, one dead;
Knew not himself, nor yet the world,
till the sun set his head aboil.
His brain afire from heat intense,
his body found its scattered sense.
He rubbed his eyes and struggled up,
looking with care both left and right.
All round him stretched a desert plain
to whose expanse there seemed no end.
Its coloured sands like carpets spread,
as hot as Hell, than blood more red.
When the blade hangs above a head,
sand is poured out, a mat is spread.
That desert showed its bloody threat;
thus scattered sand, and spread a mat.
He, sorely tried the night before,
his strength and wits somewhat restored,
Found, from that trap those beasts had laid,
a narrow path towards broad dismay.
Away he ran, like smoke, in fear
and terror from that poisoned air.
He sped so fast the flying barb,
though swift, could not have matched his speed.
When night's black made the evening dark,
he'd travelled all that desert parched.
He saw green fields and flowing streams;
his aged heart grew young again.
He drank some water, washed, then sought
a place to sleep. 'At night', he thought,
'Tis better that I rest, for night
confuses; puts my wits to flight.
My humour's melancholy; with
this dry air, and a lonely road:
How should I not gross fancies form?
such fancy-playing has slain my mind.
Tonight, for solace, I'll seek ease,
that I may not night's fancies see.'
Then, in each sheltered spot and way,
he sought a safe retreat to lie,
Until a hollow place he spied,
and saw a shaft sunk deep inside:
A pit, a thousand steps therein,
where nought but shadows entered in.
Into that pit he tumbled, like
some Joseph, legs like ropes grown slack,
And at its bottom came to rest,
like to a bird that's reached its nest.
Once safe, he hid within that veil,
laid down his head, and slept a while.
Waking from that sweet sleep, he tried,
with twigs and thorns, to make a bed;
He groped about the pit, so dark
it seemed designed of blackest silk.
He saw a white light, dirham-shaped,
like jasmine 'neath a willow's shade.
Seeking its source, around that light
he searched, and looked to left and right.
He found a breach through which the sky
let in the moonlight's shining rays.
When he saw that that fount of light
came from the moon, and it remote,
With fingers and with nails he clawed,
to make that narrow opening wide
By force; till it so spacious grew

his head and neck could wriggle through.
He put his head out and saw there
a garden radiant and fair.
He dug still more; with skill and strain,
he got his body through, and found
A garden, nay, a Paradise,
besting Iram's in every wise,
Filled, as with myriad idols fair,
with box and cypress clustered there.
Its many fruit-trees, laden down,
bowed low, in worship, to the ground.
Fruits without number, which refreshed
the soul, themselves as fresh as life.
Like ruby goblets filled with wine
its apples; pure carnelian
Caskets its pomegranates; balls
bursting with musk its quinces; smiles
Rained from pistachios; nectarines,
suspended from their branches, gleamed
Like red and yellow rubies; sweet
as halva, its bananas kissed
Its dates; its pears their smiles bestowed,
and clustered grapes like bright gems glowed.
With honeyed figs and almonds white
it seemed a bowl of sweet delights.
Its grape-vines, with hats set awry,
held white and black beneath their sway.
Grape juice and pomegranates red
and fiery, took revenge for blood.
Orange-tree branches, citron leaves,
formed in each space their canopies.
The garden, with a juggler's spells,
played tricks with bright-hued melon balls.
When Mahan found this Paradise,
he turned his heart from that last night's
Tormenting Hell; then ate a few
of those refreshing, luscious fruits.
Their sweetness such delights conferred,
his smacking lips could loud be heard.
He marvelled at those fruits; ate some,
cast some away; when all at once
From somewhere a loud cry arose:
'Seize the thief, wherever he goes!'
An old man came, aboil with rage,
a club upon his shoulder; said,
'Who are you, demon who steals fruit?
Why come you to this place by night?
For years I've kept this garden safe,
and not been troubled by a thief.
What sort of man are you? what line?
what are you? who? what is your name?'
His questions thus to Mahan put,
the poor man nearly died of fright.
'I am a stranger, far from home,
in a strange place,' he said; 'be kind
To strangers who have seen great pain,
that Heaven may call you welcoming.'
The old man, hearing his excuse,
towards him felt more well-disposed.
He quickly laid his stick aside,
put him at ease, sat down beside
Mahan, and said, 'Tell me your tale;
what have you seen? What ills befell
You, at the hands of ignorant men?
what evils have the evil done?'
Hearing these comforting words,
Mahan saw sympathy in the old man;
He told his story, all the pains
and woes that had befallen him:
Of falling in plight after plight;
of suffering torments every night;
Now black with grief, now white with joy,
and, in the end, all hopes destroyed;
Till that pit and that blessed light
had brought him from the dark of night
Into the garden. Thus he told
his tale; his secrets all revealed.
The old man, at these wondrous words,
became amazed at what he'd heard.
'We must give grateful thanks', he said,
'that you've escaped torment and dread.'
Seeing his friendly attitude,
Mahan expressed his gratitude,
Then asked, 'What was that dreadful place?
What land? What country is it which
Last night appeared like Judgement Day,
and not a soul heeded my cry.
Its fire made smoke rise from my brain;
one spark set all that stir aflame.
Demons I saw, and lost myself;
so is it with the demon-struck.
Against me came a thousand troops
of countless demons and wild beasts.
They pulled me, beat me, threw me down;
demons, wild beasts, bane piled on bane.
In darkness is the key to light;
only in black can one see white.
But I've seen so much black on black
I feared I would go blind from fright.
So great was my bewilderment,
my mouth was dry, my eyes were wet,
At what I saw I sometimes screamed,
or rubbed my eyes as in a dream.
I went ahead, and travelled on,
with "There's no power" and "In God's name",
Till God delivered me from pain;

from dark the Water of Life I gained.
I found a garden fairer than
Iram; a fairer gardener. How then
Was last night's fear relieved; tonight
where do my ease and safety lie?'
'You have escaped from sorrow's bonds,
and come into salvation's shrine:
That desert which these lands surrounds
is frightful, bare, the demons' home;
And those black forms that filled the plain
were demons who devour men;
First they deceive and lead astray,
and then torment men utterly.
They feign right, but play crooked; take
one's hand to cast him in the pit.
Their love was but of hate the sign;
such are the demon's ways. The man
Who practises lies and deceit
is like the demons of that pit.
Many such demons has this world,
who, fools themselves, make mock of fools;
Sometimes conceal their lies with truth,
sometimes poison with honey brew.
False fancies are of no avail;
'tis truth that God has made prevail.
Truth is survival's key; thereby
are miracles known from magic's lies.
You are of simple heart, it's plain;
thus fancies could assail your brain.
The tricks those base ones played on you
they only to the simple show.
Your terror made a Turkish raid
on you; wove fancies in your head.
Those violent deeds, that dreadful play,
were meant to make you lose your way.
But had your heart been bold, your mind
would not have all those fancies shown.
Since you've escaped that demons' den,
how long drink dregs? now taste pure wine;
Think that tonight you're newly born,
and to us, from that world, God-given.
This precious garden, like to Heaven,
that you have with your heart's blood gained,
Belongs to me, without dispute;
no flower but affirms this truth.
Nourished with love its pleasant fruits,
each tree from some fair garden brought.
Although its income's meagre, yet
it would make any city great.
I have a palace; stores as well;
great heaps of gold, and precious jewels.
I have all this, but have no son,
on whom to fix my heart. Thus, when
I saw you, who've such virtue shown,
I set my heart on you as son.
If you're content (your slave I am),
I will put all this in your name,
That you may roam this garden fresh,
enjoy its blessings, boast of it.
If you desire, for you I'll seek
a fresh and lovely bride; I'll fix
My heart on you, rejoice, provide
all that you and your bride may need,
If you will honour my command,
and swear to keep my covenant.'
'What are these words?' replied Mahan;
'the cypress far excels the thorn;
But since as son you welcome me,
I bow to your authority.
May you rejoice, who've given me this
great joy and fortune.' Then he kissed
The old man's hands with joy; and both
then joined their hands to bind their oath.
The old man tightly gripped his hand,
pronounced his oaths, and sealed their bond.
'Arise,' he said; the guest rose up;
he led him to another spot,
And showed to him a lofty court,
all spread with carpets of rich silk.
Its vaulted arches reached the sky;
its dome above a pool rose high.
Its walls and court of marble were,
that shone as bright as silver pure.
A broad fagade made narrow by
cypress, willow, and poplar trees
That girt it; such a lofty place
the sky could barely kiss its waist.
Before that kingly portico
a lofty, broad sandal-tree grew,
Its branches heavily adorned
with leaves, so that it kissed the ground.
Upon it was a seat, firm fixed,
of solid boards and branches mixed.
Carpets were spread upon that seat,
like the tree's leaves both soft and sweet.
'Ascend this tree,' the old man said;
'and if you food and water need,
A wallet's there, a pitcher too,
with fresh white bread, and water blue.
I'll go and make all ready; make
my house for you a pleasant place.
Until I come, wait patiently,
but don't come down from this tall tree.
Whoever questions you, heed not;
let silence be your sole response.
Let no one's courtesy deceive,

and to no one attention give.
If I come, seek from me the truth,
that it is I, and then admit
Me to you. Since our pact has formed,
like milk and honey, a new bond
Of friendship, house and garden both
are yours; my dwelling your abode.
Tonight beware the Evil Eye,
and rest at ease all other nights.'
When the old man added his oath
to this detailed advice, he showed
Mahan a leather ladder, placed
for climbing to that lofty couch.
He said, 'Come, mount this leather; grip
it firmly as you climb; pull up
The leather from the ground, so that
no one may trick you. Thus tonight
Gird yourself 'gainst the serpent sly;
tomorrow with the treasure play.
Although my halva comes by night,
its saffron must be seen by light.
Though this night's pear be bitter, dawn
will bring sweet pomegranates' gain.'
He said this; towards his palace went,
to make all ready for Mahan.
Mahan climbed up that lofty tree;
rolled up the leather ladder. He
Then settled on that soaring seat,
all high ones low beneath his feet.
There, in that amber-shaded room,
he amber spread, like the north wind.
He opened up the pouch and ate
some thin white and thick yellow bread,
And from that jar, cooled by the hand
of the north wind, clear water drank.
When he found ease upon that fair
Greek couch with Chinese carpets rare,
The camphor-scented sandalwood
assuaged his melancholy mood.
He leaned back and surveyed the place;
from far off twenty candles blazed
Held by fresh brides; the new-throned king
bowed down in worship. Seventeen
Princesses to the garden came,
with seventeen aspects of the moon.
Each one in different mode adorned,
white linen over sugared roses drawn.
When they the garden-palace approached,
candles in hand, each maid a torch,
They decked a royal feasting-place;
spread carpets as the foremost seat.
Candle on candle shone thereon,
and all was joy and pleasure keen.
That peri-face who was their queen,
in their jewelled necklace rarest gem,
Took her own place, and sat her maids
beside her. Then they, like to birds,
Began to sing; their tuneful songs
the true birds from the skies brought down.
Their sweet song, their seductive tones,
stole peace from Mahan and the moon.
Their feet beat wildly in the dance;
their stirring rhythm did all entrance.
A breeze arose; played clever tricks,
uncovering their citron breasts.
The darkened night poured sugar white;
mixed sandal with their citrons bright.
In suffering for those citrons fair,
Mahan rubbed sandal from afar.
He tried a hundred remedies
to cast himself down from that tree:
Amongst those houri forms to fall,
to Paradise, without the call
Of Judgement. Then he called to mind
the old man's warning; strove to bind
The demons of his nature, while
those beauties showed their conjuror's wiles.
When they had sported for a bit,
they laid a feast and set to eat;
A ruby tray with pearls adorned
(themselves bright pearls to rubies joined);
Foods that had seen nor fire nor water,
scented with aloes, musk, rose-water;
Soups made with saffron and with sugar,
and pomegranate soup still sweeter;
Lambs fattened on Bulgarian milk;
fresh fish and plumpest fowl, and disks
Of bread white as camphor, slim
and tender as the houris' forms;
Fine sweets preserved with sugar; more
varieties than can be told;
A myriad strange cakes, all formed
and dressed with oil and sweet perfume.
When they this sumptuous feast had laid,
a feast? nay, say, a very world,
Then sweetly spoke those beauties' queen:
'My odd will change to even soon.
From sandal pure comes aloes' scent;
go towards that scent; surely you'll find
One redolent of aloes, mixed
with sandalwood, by darkness hid.
Like aloes black and sandal gold,
night's wrought my lute of sandalwood.
A share of perfume has my brain;
how good are fragrance and pure wine.
A friendly soul, it seems to me,

who holds some wish, is in that tree;
Summon him down to be our mate,
that he may with my fancy sport.
If he'll not come, tell him the feast
is laid; and that my love's too great
That I lay hand to it, till he,
the guest, arrives. Then to him say,
"Arise; enjoy a friendly mate;
the feast is laid; don't make her wait."
That beauty, narrow-mouthed, approached
the sandal-tree; cajoled and coaxed;
Like nightingale saluted him,
and brought the fair youth, rose-like, down.
The guest, with beauty of his own,
was pleased to dance unto that tune.
He who had sought a go-between
went quickly after that new friend.
From that assault of youthfulness
he quite forgot the man's advice.
When youth makes nature boil, how shall
old men's wise counsel be recalled?
When passion had removed all shame,
Mahan that bright moon's guest became.
Seeing Mahan's fair face, that moon
bowed low to him, as to a king.
She sat him on her carpet; showered
sweet sugar; he rose-water poured.
With him she shared a tray of food
(such is the custom of a host);
And every moment on him pressed,
with tender love, some special dish.
The feast done (all had eaten well),
the ruby winecup fed the soul.
When they had drunk some cups of wine,
then from their path they banished shame.
When drink had rent shame's veil, Mahan
felt longing for that moon grow warm.
He saw a spring-like beauty, fresh,
an idol in her charm and grace;
Like curds and whey all soft and white,
more sweet than sugared milk her breast.
With honey and rose-water filled,
her apple cheeks the heart enthralled.
Her form like quicksilver that slips
quick through the fingers, in its grace.
Her bosom like the garden rose;
her narrow waist a taper showed.
The moon spread over her its veil;
Mahan's desire grew greater still.
He'd bite her healing lips so sweet,
or suck her honey like the bee.
But when he would that moon embrace,
from shame she turned away her face.
He clasped that Chinese beauty fast,
that hundred-petalled rose, cypress
Of silver; kissed that fount of wine;
with ruby sealed cornelian.
When on that eyes' light, sugared fount,
his own approving eyes he bent,
He saw a foul afreet, from mouth
to foot created from God's wrath:
A buffalo with boarish tusks,
no one had ever dreamed of such
A dragon! nay, a devil she,
with jaws that gaped from earth to sky.
A humped back, God forbid! bent like
a bow that's bound with coarse tiz bark.
Her back a bow, her face a crab;
a stench that reached a thousand leagues.
Her nose a kiln for baking bricks;
her mouth like a cloth-dyer's vat.
All grinning like a crocodile,
and holding fast her guest the while.
Upon his face and head she rained
wild kisses, and then to him said:
'O you whose head has fallen to
my grasp; whose breast my sharp teeth chew:
You laid both hand and tooth on me to
kiss both my mouth and chin. Now see
My claws and teeth, like spears and swords;
true claws and teeth are these, not those.
When you so hot at first did seek
my love, why now is your lust weak?
These lips the same; seek kisses then;
this face the same; don't shun this moon.'
(Don't take wine from a saqi who
will pour deceit-filled cups for you;
Don't hire a house within a street
where the policeman is a thief.)
'Such acts as mine are fit and true;
as should be done, I'll do with you.
If I do not as you deserve,
then I am as you saw me first.'
Each moment she dealt such torments,
her fiery acts of violence.
When, rendered helpless, poor Mahan
saw that fair moon to dragon turned,
Those silver limbs now hoofs of boar;
cow's tail where cow-eyes were before,
Beneath that dragon black as pitch
he lost control; in terror wet
Himself; screamed like a child in fright,
or like a woman giving birth.
And, like the White Div, that black bear
with kisses set his willow afire.
Until, when the dawn's light appeared,

the crowing of dawn's bird was heard;
The veil of dark was lifted from
the world, and all those fancies gone.
Those forms of clay, who'd rubies seemed,
all vanished; not a one remained.
Before the palace Mahan lay,
until there showed the light of day.
When bright day's healing fragrance brought
back to Mahan his vanished wits,
A hideous place assailed his eyes:
a Hell in place of Paradise.
The music gone, laments remained;
dust made the eyes of fancy blind.
That building high, by fancy formed,
now proved a rare, fantastic thing.
The garden was a thorn-filled place;
that portico all full of mists.
All weeds and thorns, cypress and box;
the fruits all ants, the trees all snakes.
Those chickens' breasts, kids' backs, were nought
but rotten carrion; the flutes,
The lutes and rebecs, turned to bones
of onagers, beasts of all kinds.
Those stuffs adorned with jewels were skins
of leather, with the tanners' stench.
Those pools that seemed like brilliant tears
trenches of stinking water were.
The remnants of his sumptuous feast,
the dregs left when the saqi passed,
Were trash, where once fine things were found;
nay, reeking, suppurating wounds.
And where sweet wine and basil showed,
now stinking privies overflowed.
Once more Mahan became dismayed
at his state; God's forgiveness prayed;
No power to set out again,
nor yet the courage to remain.
He thought, 'What an amazing thing;
what compass has this juncture drawn?
Last night to see a garden all
abloom; today a place of trials.
Why show to me both rose and thorn?
What harvest does life's garden bring?'
And he knew not that all we prize
is but a dragon in moon's guise.
See, if the curtain he'd but raise,
for what the fool his love displays.
Those forms so fair, Chinese and Greek,
are ugly blacks when you but look.
Blood hidden by a veil of skin;
like wine without, a privy within.
If from this bathhouse they'd but strip
the skin, none loves a rubbish-heap!
Many a prudent man who thought
to buy a snake-stone, snakes has bought;
Many a careless man has rued
of buying musk; found it dry wood.
When Mahan, from those who wished him ill,
escaped, like I from Mahan's tale,
He made intention to do good,
repented, and made vows to God.
With a pure heart, to God he fled;
set off, while weeping tears of blood,
Until he reached pure water bright,
and washed; then on the ground he knelt,
Bowed low, abased himself, and moaned
to Him Who aids those without friend:
'O Thou Who loosest knots, untie
my tangle; Guide, show me the way.
You only can these knots unloose;
You guide my way, and no one else.
Yet You are not my guide alone:
whom else the way have You not shown?'
A while he wailed unto his God,
and rubbed his face upon the ground;
Then raised his head; and lo! there came
before him, one in his own form,
Like April's season, dressed in green,
and ruddy as the radiant dawn.
He said, 'In truth, who are you, lord?
Oh what a precious essence is yours.'
'I am Khizr, o pious man;
and I have come to take your hand.
By your new, pure intention formed,
I'll take you back to your own home.
Give me your hand, there, as you stand;
then close your eyes, and open them.'
When Mahan heard Khizr greet him thus,
thirsting, he found the Water of Life.
Quickly he gave the saint his hand
and closed his eyes; then opened them,
And found him in that refuge, from
which that foul div had led him wrong;
Opened the garden gate; made haste
to Cairo from that land of waste.
He found his friends, all silent, there;
each one blue mourning garb did wear.
All that had passed, from start to end,
he told in full to all his friends.
Since, in their love of him, his friends
had for his sake blue garments donned,
And, testing them, their colour stayed;
their blue would not be washed away;
He strove to harmonize with them;
brought robes of blue and put them on.
Blue settled on him firmly then;

sky-like, he took the hue of Time.
The lofty sky has found no hue
nobler for its silk robes than blue.
Who wears the colour of the sky,
the sun's but bread upon his tray.
That flower blue which is so prized
a disk from the sun's disk receives.
Whichever way the sun inclines
the flower regards it. Indians,
Because of this, call every flower
that's blue in hue, 'sun-worshipper'.
When she had told her tale, the king
embraced with love that lovely moon.
37.
How Bahram Sat on a Thursday in the Sandal Dome: The Tale of the Princess of the Sixth Clime.
On Thursday, that auspicious day
owes Jupiter felicity,
When morning's breath its musk unloosed,
the sandal earth burnt aloes-wood.
On its exemplar, Bahram made
of sandal hue his cup and robe;
Departed from the dome of blue,
and went towards that of sandal hue.
That Chinese beauty gave him wine:
a Kawsar from a houri's hand.
He drank, intent on joy, till night,
and in the wine took great delight.
When the kohl-coloured sea's pearl-shell
filled up the whale-sky's maw with pearls,
The king besought that maid of Chin
with slanting eyes, to clear his mind.
The Chinese princess smoothed her brow;
from date-like lips made honey flow:
'O you who life to this world brings;
loftiest king among all kings:
May you, more than the desert sands,
the mountains' rocks, the waters in
The seas, live long, Fortune your friend;
know life and fortune without end.
O lord who, like the sun, light brings;
not merely king, but making kings:
I am continually undone
by my own halting, stammering tongue;
But now, the fragrant wine before,
some pearls of discourse I must pour.
Yet since the king desires ease;
wishes that saffron may him please,
My rag-bag tongue I'll open wide,
and laughter add to his delight.'
That sun-adoring moon bowed down
before that sun, and kissed his hand.
The Tale of Good and Bad.
Once, from my city, two young men
went journeying towards another town.
Each in his travelling pouch had made
his own provision for the way.
One was named Good, the other Bad;
each one was like his name in deed.
They spent some days upon the road;
from those provisions which they had,
Good ate of his, while Bad his kept;
one sowed his corn, the other reaped.
Then, travelling side by side, at last
they reached a boiling desert waste:
A fiery furnace, whose fierce heat
would make the hardest iron grow soft.
It was a hot and arid land
which turned the north wind to simoom.
Bad knew well that that blasted waste
was vast, of water there no trace.
Slyly his waterskin he filled,
and hid it in his bag, like pearls.
'There's water on the way,' Good thought,
not worrying, and knowing not
There was none, but a pit. So they
sped through that desert hot and dry.
When seven days they'd travelled on,
Bad still had water; Good's was gone.
Bad, who from Good his water hid,
said nothing either good or bad.
When Good found that that evil man,
ill-natured, had some water hidden,
And secretly from time to time
drank of it, as of scented wine,
Although he burned with thirst, Good sealed
his lips from any vain appeal;
Thirsting, he saw that water, shed
bitter salt tears; his pain endured,
Until he grew so parched and dry
he could no longer close his eyes.
Before and after prayer each day,
his thirst drained all his strength away.
He had with him two flame-hued gems,
two lustrous rubies, like water in stone.
Those hidden gems brought water forth
from viewers' eyes (not for the mouth).
Now he took out those lustrous gems
and placed them on those waterless sands.
'I die of thirst; help me,' he said;
'my fire with some water quench.
A drink of water sweet and clear:
grant it to me, or sell it dear.
Into your water cast these gems;
my essence with your water bless.'
Bad, may God's wrath fall on him, then
opened the pages of his name.

'Don't hew a well from stone,' he said;
'I care not; so leave off this fraud.
You'd give me jewels in this waste land
to take them from me in the town.
I am no fool, to be deceived!
I trick more humans than a div.
And when I play my game, your piece
can't match my tricks. Of such deceits
And spells, a hundred I've performed;
don't try to gamble; for I scorn
To let you drink my water; then,
when you reach town, my honour ruin.
How should I take from you that gem,
when you will take it back again?
I'll have a jewel you can't take back
in any way.' 'What jewel is that?'
Good said; 'tell me, that I may give
it to the jewel-seeker, and live.'
Bad said, 'The two jewels of your sight,
each one more precious than its mate.
Sell me your eyes for water; or,
if not, of water think no more.'
Good said, 'Have you no shame before
your God? cold water for hot fire?
I find a source of water sweet:
what work is this, my eyes to take?
How should I bid my eyes farewell?
what use were then a hundred wells?
To give my eyes for water, how
can I? sell it to me for gold,
Then take the gems; take all I own;
I'll write a deed for everything.
I swear that I will be content
(by the world's Lord) with this judgement.
O upright man, spare me my eyes;
let not cold water turn to ice
Your heart.', 'This is but talk; for he
who thirsts', said Bad, 'makes empty pleas.
I want those eyes; these gems will bring
no gain; those eyes outvalue gems.'
Good was perplexed; shed bitter tears
for that spring's water; truly feared
He'd die of thirst, and could not save
his life; and so he did deceive
His warm heart with cold water; where
is one who thirsts, who'll water forswear?
He said, 'Rise; sword and dagger bring;
but give the thirsting man a drink.
Take out my burning eyes; and then
my fire with cold water quench.'
He thought that, by surrendering, he'd
once more find hope, after great dread.
When Bad saw this he drew his knife;
like wind drew near that thirsting earth.
The lamps of his two eyes he pierced,
and quenched their light without remorse.
His blade made the narcissus stained
rose-red; took from the crown that gem.
The thirsting man's eyes thus destroyed,
Bad gave no water, but set off.
He took Good's jewels, and his effects,
and left the blind man destitute.
When Bad departed, Good knew nought
of good or ill. He rolled about,
All bloodied, in the dust; 'twas well
he had no eyes to see himself.
Had he had eyes to see his state,
he would have surely died from fright.
There was a Kurd, a noble chief,
who kept his flock safe from the wolf.
He had fine herds of beasts as well,
like no one ever possessed; there dwelled
Seven, eight tents of kinsmen there,
he wealthy, while the rest were poor.
The Kurd, who wandered hill and plain
like desert-roaming nomads, came
For pasture to the desert; grazed
his flock from plain to plain some days;
Where grass and water might be found,
some two weeks made his camping-ground;
The grass devoured, that place forsook,
and elsewhere drove his hungry flock.
By chance, those two days, that bold man
had loosed his claws there like a lion.
The Kurd a lovely daughter had,
a beauty Hindu-moled, Turk-eyed;
A cypress watered by the heart;
tender, and raised by loving art.
Her rope-like curls fell past her waist,
and yoked the bright moon to her face;
Like garden violets they streamed,
locks blacker than the raven's wing.
Her magic glances, drunk with charm,
held power over the false world's harm.
Her Babylonian charms made all
yearn to be captured by her spell.
Her mole gave blackness to the night;
her radiance made the moon shine bright.
Her narrow, sugar-biting lips
made strait the way to loving kiss.
That tented moon, so full of grace,
came seeking water like a fish.
Far from the road a cool spring lay,
from which that tribe its water drew.
She filled her pitcher there, then went
to bear it, hidden, to her tent;

When suddenly she heard a moan
from that poor desperate wounded man.
She followed it, until she found
a youth, stretched on the bloody ground.
He jerked his limbs in pain, and called
in supplication to his God.
The charmer thought no more of charm;
she went straight to the wounded man.
'Alas!' she cried; 'Say, who are you,
abased and bloody? Tell me, who
Against your youth has done this crime?
who brought you such a grievous wrong?'
'O heavenly angel, if you be
angel or peri-born,' said he,
'I've suffered many wondrous things;
the tale thereof is very long.
I thirst; I die from water's lack;
help, if you can, my thirst to slake.
If you've no water, go; I'm dead;
but if there is a drop, I'm saved.'
That sweet-lipped saqi, key to life,
gave water pure as the Water of Life.
The suffering, thirsty man drank deep,
much as he could, of that cold draught.
His parched soul was revived again,
and that bright lamp rejoiced in him.
His eyes, that from their place were torn,
she put back, and invoked God's name.
Though the white membrane had been scratched,
the pupils still remained intact.
She saw his legs had strength enough
that from his place he might be moved.
She put his eyes in place, and bound
them tight, then nobly took his hand.
She laboured; brought him to his feet,
and guided him by the right path.
The blind man went with her, until
they reached the place wherein she dwelled.
To a familiar servant she
entrusted him: 'Gently, that he
May not be made to suffer more,
carry him slowly to my door.'
She quickly to her mother sped
and told the tale. Her mother said,
'Why did you leave him when you came,
not bring him with you? We might find
Some remedy to ease his pain,
and make him comfortable again.'
She said, 'I've brought him; if he live,
at any moment he'll arrive.'
The servant who had brought him led
the weary man to a soft bed.
They settled him, and brought him food,
gave him some roasted meat and broth.
The heat-struck man, with cold sighs, ate,
then in great pain laid down his head.
When in the evening from the plain,
the Kurd came, ate, and ease regained,
He saw an unfamiliar scene
which but unsettled him again:
He saw one lying senseless there,
like one hurt who of life despairs.
'Whence came this helpless man?' said he,
'and why so weary and so weak?'
None could explain what first befell
the youth; and they could only tell
How his dear eyes were from him rent:
bright onyx pierced by adamant.
When the Kurd saw that suffering man
was sightless, his eyes tightly bound,
He said, 'From that tall tree there must
some leaves be gathered, then be crushed,
Their juice obtained, rubbed on the wound,
to take away its burning pain.
Were such a remedy obtained,
his eyes their brightness would regain.
A wound to the eyes, though it be grave,
will by those leaves' juice be assuaged.'
He told them where the tree was: 'Close
by that well-spring of ours, there grows
A rare and ancient tree, whose scent,
perfumed, relieves the brain. Its trunk
Has, from its root, formed branches twain,
set far apart. The leaves of one,
Like houri's robes all fair and bright,
bring brightness to departed sight;
The others, like the Water of Life,
cure epileptics of their fits.'
When the Kurd's daughter heard these words,
she set her mind to make that cure.
She begged her father to restore
that poor man's health; and when the Kurd
Heard her entreaties, he set out
to seek the tree. He took from it
A handful of those precious leaves,
a sovereign remedy from death.
He brought them; that maid took them then
and pounded them; their juice obtained,
She strained it till no dregs remained,
and poured it in those blind eyes; bound
Them with that remedy. The man,
weary, sat up a while from pain;
Then fixed his eyes upon success,
and laid his head again to rest.
For five days, with those salves upon
his eyes, his head was tightly bound.

They loosed the bandage the fifth day;
wiped from his eyes the remedy.
His ruined eyes were sound once more;
he was as he had been before.
The sightless man opened his eyes
like twin narcissi at sunrise;
Then Good gave thanks for that good deed:
from blindness by that blindfold freed.
All in that house, their worry healed,
opened their hearts, their faces veiled.
The Kurdish maid had taken such pains
that lo! she fell in love with him.
That cypress, his narcissi bright
(unlocked, the pearl-casket of sight),
That peri-maid more loving grew
towards that fair and noble youth.
Good also loved her, for her deeds
of kindness, and the love she showed.
Although he had not seen her face,
he saw her move, observed her grace.
Often her sweet discourse he'd heard;
been tended by her gentle hands.
He'd fixed his heart on her; that fair
had done the same, oh blessed pair!
Each day at morning Good would gird
himself in service to the Kurd,
He guarded camels, kept the flocks;
gentle and vigilant, he watched.
He kept the plague of wolf from all
the flock; protected great and small.
When the nomadic Kurd had gained
much ease of body due to him,
He honoured him with friendship; put
him over both his house and goods.
When Good became one of the house,
that question once again was broached:
They sought the tale of his wounded eyes;
who had abused him in this wise?
Good did not hide the tale of Bad;
he told them all that had occurred:
The jewels' tale; the water bought
when scorched by fires of thirst so hot;
How these gems from his eyes were torn,
and how those other jewels were stolen:
How Bad pierced these and took the others,
and left him thirsting without water.
When the Kurd heard Good's tale, he laid
his face upon the ground and prayed;
Gave thanks that that relentless storm
had done no damage to this bloom.
When they heard that angelic man
had from that demon seen such harm,
Good grew more famous than his name,
more precious than their lives to them.
They treated him as he deserved;
that beauty would let no one serve
Him but herself; so, veiled, she'd give
him water, and her own fire hid.
At once Good gave his heart to her;
pledged her that life she had restored.
Grateful to that rare pearl, he served
the cows, the sheep and camel herds.
'Could such a lovely one', thought he,
'be wed to a poor man like me?
For such a lovely, perfect maid
without great wealth cannot be gained.
I, who from need their bread consume:
how should I hope for such a bond.
'Tis best to flee this peril; make
a shrewd pretext; a journey take.'
A week passed in this woeful state;
one evening he went home, his heart,
Afflicted by that beauty, sore:
a beggar by a treasure's door.
Facing pure water, more athirst
than ever he had been at first.
That night, from his heart's grievous wound,
his sad tears made his clay to bloom.
He told the Kurd, 'O kindly man,
who treats a stranger as a friend:
You gave me back my eyes' bright light;
restored to me both heart and life.
Your table's crumbs have nourished me;
I've countless blessings from your tray.
Your brand is nobler than my brow;
I can't express the thanks I owe.
But search me, both inside and out:
my blood gives off your table's scent.
I can't repay your care; my head
I place upon your tray instead.
I can no longer be a guest;
rub salt upon my wounded breast.
For all the blessings given by you,
I can't give thanks in measure due,
Unless God in His grace will grant
me that which will discharge my debt.
Though leaving you will bring me grief,
I ask permission for relief
From service to you; for I've long
been far from my affairs and home.
I am resolved, tomorrow at dawn,
to set out homewards. If in form
I'll be apart, your threshold's dust
my mind holds ever uppermost.
I hope that you, a fount of light,
when I am far, won't think my heart

Far from you, but will spread the wings
of my resolve; make what I've consumed
Lawful to me.' He ceased his words;
great grief arose among the Kurds.
Loud Kurdish weeping could be heard,
and cries from left and right. The Kurd
Was sobbing, that fair maid more so;
their brains were parched, their eyes a flow.
When they had wept they bowed their heads,
like water turned to ice. The Kurd,
So wise and sage, then raised his head,
and bade the servants leave. He said
To Good, 'Wise youth, who clever art,
and virtuous, loving and quiet:
What if, returning to your town,
you're injured by another friend?
Here you have ease, success, and love;
you govern all. Men who are good
Do not to evil men give rein;
deliver to their foes their friends.
Only one precious daughter do
I have (and I own great wealth too):
A loving and obedient maid,
to say she was not would be bad.
Though musk within its sac is hid,
its scent is plain throughout the world.
If you will set your heart on me,
and on my daughter, you will be
Dearer than life; for such a maid,
I freely choose you as a mate;
All that I own, camels and sheep,
I'll give to you, that you may be
A wealthy man; with love, among
you twain live, till departure come.'
When Good this happy news had heard,
he did due homage to the Kurd.
Their joyous words thus said, they went
to sleep, both loving and content.
When dawn's bright Aaron girt its belt,
the cock crowed forth like golden bells.
The Eastern sultan's fortune shone
full regal as he took his throne.
The joyful Kurd rose from his bed
and readied all, that they might wed.
(Strong are the seeds of progeny
from marriage, which true union be.)
He gave to Good his daughter; joined
Venus and Mercury in one bond.
The thirsting man found the Water of Life;
upon the bloom shone the sun's light.
To him who thirsted, that saqi bore
a draught far sweeter than Kawsar.
If first she gave him water plain,
the Water of Life 'twas in the end.
Together happily they lived,
and lacked for nothing they might need;
They called those former times to mind,
and joyed in what they had content.
What substance that he had, the Kurd
bestowed on those he held most dear,
Till all his wealth, his flocks and land,
belonged to Good. When they moved on
From that well-watered pasture fair,
tree-girt, towards the desert sere,
Good passed that sandal-scented tree
from which his life found remedy.
Not from one branch: from both of those
tall trunks, he plucked many broad leaves.
The one was epilepsy's cure;
the other wounded sight restored.
Two sacks with those rare leaves he filled,
and placed them in the camels' load;
To no one else the leaves revealed,
but kept those remedies concealed,
Until they reached a town, in which
the king's fair daughter suffered fits.
Though they'd tried many remedies,
she was not cured, and all did grieve.
Each doctor who some knowledge claimed
came to that town in hope of fame,
That, with a cure, they might dispel,
from that fair peri, the dives ill.
The king made a condition first:
'Whoever finds a proper cure,
On him my daughter I'll bestow,
and honour him as son-in-law.
But he who sees this maiden fair,
and does not make a fitting cure:
I shall attack him with the blade,
and from his body cut his head.'
When that incurable obtained
no cure, those doctors were then slain.
A thousand lost their heads, of them
some strangers and some citizens.
This story spread throughout the land;
yet everyone, in hope of gain,
Lost his head in return for nought;
the shedding of his own blood sought.
When Good heard of this he was sure
he could himself provide the cure.
He sent a message to the king:
'I can remove this painful thorn.
By God's grace, I will cure her ill,
and your condition will fulfil.
But my condition, by your leave
(your servant's far removed from greed),

Is, that the cure I shall effect
shall be done only for God's sake,
That God to me success may grant,
and thus the means unto that end.'
His message reached the king, who gave
permission to pay homage. Good
Went there; made his obeisance;
the king then asked, 'O virtuous man,
What is your name?' "Tis Good,' said he;
'my star foretold felicity.'
The king in this good omen saw;
said, 'Man of Good, who maketh cures:
May, in this task of good intent,
the outcome be good like your name.'
He bade a trusted servant bear
Good to his daughter's chamber, where
He saw a sun-like, cypress form,
turned willow by the fever's wind;
A restless lion, that cow-eyed maid:
no ease by night, no sleep by day.
He had with him a few leaves from
that blessed tree, all tightly bound.
He ground them; from their powder made,
a cool, sweet drink that would assuage
The thirsting; gave it to the maid,
and her affliction quickly fled.
She drank; and, from that tumult freed,
she slept at once. When Good could see
That that fair spring was fast asleep,
and from all fear of anguish safe,
Out of that heavenly palace he went,
and set out for his home, content.
That peri-faced maid slept three days;
the king knew nothing of her state.
On the third day she raised her head,
and ate whatever she desired.
Hearing this news, the king, with joy,
ran barefoot to her chambers; saw
His daughter well, her wits restored,
seated upon a couch. He bowed
Before her; said (his joy intense),
'O maid who has no mate but sense,
How is your grievous illness now
(may trial's wind blow far from you)?'
She, awed by his magnificence,
addressed the king with loving thanks.
He left the harem, with his grief
now lessened, and his joy increased.
His daughter bade an intimate
to tell that king of good repute,
'Since (I have heard) 'tis writ that kings
must keep their oaths; and since, that time
When sharp blades severed heads, the king
fulfilled his oath; now that there's come
A head that's earned a crown, he must
again fulfil his oath, so that,
Firm with the sword as it has been,
it will not fail him with the crown.
So many heads by sword undone:
let one be honoured by the crown.
He who my remedy obtained,
who loosed the bonds of bitter pain:
I will not leave him to his fate;
for none but he shall be my mate.
'Tis best that we not break our troth,
but fittingly discharge our oath.'
The king too judged it best he should
fulfil his pact. Thus noble Good
Was summoned to the king, and sought,
found in the road, and quickly brought
Before the king. They treated him
like a found pearl. Then said the king,
'O great man, why do you conceal
your face from Fortune's happy weal?'
From his own body he took off
a robe more than a kingdom's worth;
Gave other ornaments of wealth:
a jewelled baldrick, golden belt.
The citizens bedecked the town
with fair pavilions all around;
The girl came from her vaulted room,
and saw a bridegroom like the moon:
Quick, of tall stature, wondrous fair,
with musky down and musk-black hair.
With willing father, yielding bride,
Good married her, in spite of Bad.
Over treasure-door the king prevailed;
broke the unviolated seal;
Thenceforth enjoyed life fully; read
designs which were both fair and glad.
That king had a vizier of might,
the populace's great support,
Who had a daughter, wondrous fair,
her face like snow with crow's blood smeared.
That moon had suffered smallpox's blight;
it had destroyed her brilliant sight.
That minister asked the king's leave
that Good might light to her eyes give.
On that condition as before,
Good's remedy made good the cure,
And she became his wife as well:
see how that gem pierced several pearls!
From those three lovely brides, Good found
Kaykavus' throne and Kisra's crown.
Now he would sit with the vizier's
fair daughter, and gain his desires;

Now with the princess his eyes shone
(for he was sun, and she the moon);
Now with the daughter of the Kurd
he joyed; thus won three games of nard.
At last one day his fortune kind
raised him to kingship and the throne.
He took to him that city's reign,
and was established as its king.
One day he to the garden strayed,
to sport there with a lovely maid.
Bad (his companion on the road)
was by his secret heart betrayed.
He stood there, haggling with a Jew;
Good saw him (Jewish too) and knew
Him then. He said, 'When I am free,
bring him to the garden after me.'
He sought the garden, sat therein;
the Kurd stood present, sword in hand.
Bad came, all innocent, and kissed
the ground, not knowing Good, who asked,
'Tell me your name, O you whose head
will soon lament for him.' Bad said,
'I am the traveller who's called
Mubashshir, in all rare arts skilled.'
'Tell me your proper name,' said Good,
'and wash your face in your own blood.'
'I have no other name,' said he;
'now sword or winecup show to me.'
Said Good, 'You bastard, base and vile,
your blood is lawful blood to all.
Your nature's bad; you're called the same,
your deeds more evil than your name.
Are you not he who water prized;
whose cruel hand tore out that man's eyes?
And even worse, in burning heat,
you carried water, gave him nought.
You took the jewels both from his belt
and from his eyes, and caused him hurt.
I am that thirsting man you robbed;
my fortune lives, but you are dead.
You slew me, but God willed it not;
happy is he whom God supports.
Since God my fortune guarded, see:
both throne and crown He's given me.
Woe to your life, O evil one;
you took mine; you'll not save your own.'
Bad looked at Good, who knew him well;
quickly upon the ground he fell.
He cried, 'Have mercy; if I've wronged,
overlook it; 'tis myself I've harmed.
Think rather that the turning sphere
named me Bad and you Good. Before,
If I did do you such a wrong
as is entailed by my name,
In such a grave affair, perform
that which is ordered by your own.'
Good, when he grasped that point, then spared
the man from execution. Bad,
Freed from the blade, leapt up in joy
at that reprieve, and ran away.
The Kurd, a thirst for blood, pursued,
struck with the sword, cut off his head.
'If Good has kindly thoughts,' he said,
'you're Bad, and merit nought but bad.'
He searched his body, found those gems,
wrapped them inside his belt, and then
He swiftly brought them back to Good;
'Gem has returned to gem,' he said.
Good kissed the gems and gave them to
the Kurd; thus honoured jewel with jewel.
He touched his eyes, and then declared,
' 'Tis thanks to you these jewels were spared.
Those jewels I give to you by right,
because these once again have light.'
When Good's affairs thus prospered, men
saw only good from him. And when
Felicity gave him its throne,
his sackcloth turned to silk, his iron
To silver. Where Fortune guides, the thorn
is turned to dates, to gold the stone.
He settled justice firm in place,
and gave his rule a stable base.
Since that tree's wondrous, healing leaves
to harshest pain brought precious ease,
From time to time, to ward off pain,
he'd haste to that tall tree again,

Dismount beneath it, give his praise
and greetings to that land. Because
Of his deep love and gratitude,
he dyed his robes in sandalwood.
With nought else would he have to do,
and dressed in nothing but its hue.
In sandalwood lies the soul's ease;
its odour doth the spirit please.
Rubbed sandalwood cures headache; treats
the fevered heart, the liver's heat.
That sandal is earth's colour is
no wonder; it earth's colour gives.
After that Chinese Turk had told
this clever tale, with broken words,
The king did place her in his soul,
there from the Evil Eye concealed.

38.
How Bahram Sat on a Friday in the White Dome: The Tale of the Princess of the Seventh Clime.

On Friday when this willow vault
with sunlight turned its black house white,
The king, in robes of white adorned,
went joyfully to the white dome.
Venus over the fifth kingdom shone;
played for him fealty's five tunes.
Till night's black Ethiops rushed day's Turks,
the king ceased not his joyful sport.
When, with the heavens' collyrium, night
made eyes of moon and stars shine bright,
He bade that maiden (loving, kind;
a night companion, born of dawn)
To make her sweetest music sound,
and through the echoing dome resound.
When she had worthy praise intoned
upon his crown and lofty throne,
And prayers which make prosperity
increase, befitting sovereignty,
She said, 'Since the king asks a tale
that pleases, I'll say what I can tell.'
The Tale of the Man who Wished to Sport in the Garden with his Beloved, and was Prevented each Time.
My mother said (a worthy dame;
all men are wolves, but she a lamb):
A friend of my own age, may she
and her house thrive, invited me
One day. She brought a tray, well-filled
with foods, much more than I can tell:
Lamb, fowl, and cumin-flavoured stew;
round cakes, oil cakes, and thin cakes too;
Rare sweets which have no name, made with
pistachios, or almond pith;
Delicate fruits which tempt the tongue:
Rayy's grapes, apples from Isfahan;
To say nought of the drinker's sweet,
the pomegranate; for those breasts
With pomegranates filled the house.
When we'd enjoyed those luscious foods,
We turned to wine, and laughing, we,
all story-tellers, mingled free.
Each told a story: one about
herself, another of her mate.
The turn came to one silver-limbed,
like milk in sugar, honeyed milk;
A charmer, whose enchanting words
did lull to rest both fish and birds.
From her carnelian lips she loosed
fresh founts; began a tale of love.
The Young Master's Tale.
There was a youth (she sweetly said),
as eloquent as sugar-reed;
A Jesus at his studies, and
a Joseph who the feast illumed.
A wise, accomplished man was he;
of all things best, his chastity.
He had a garden like Iram,
that gardens circled, like a shrine.
Its fragrant earth with amber mixed;
its fruits like those of Paradise;
Like pomegranates filled with hearts;
all roses, with no thorns about.
(Rose gardens sport sharp thorns to guard
the garden from the wounding Eye.)
Beneath young cypresses fresh streams
flowed, girt about by verdure green.
Bird upon bird raised song on high,
as if an organ filled the sky.
An emerald palace the cypress seemed,
a dove on every branch enthroned;
Beneath its clay-bound feet they moved
to song all those with hearts to love.
Its four walls, carefully designed,
were smooth and solid all around.
Its buildings to the moon rose high;
no way therein for Evil Eye.
The wish for such a bower would brand
the heart of any wealthy man.
Each week that man, in his free time,
went to enjoy his garden; ranged
Tall cypresses, and jasmine sowed;
rubbed musk, mixed amber moist, renewed
The cup in the narcissus' grasp;
gave violets' promise to the grass.
Around that garden he would roam
a while, and then return to home.
Once, at the time of noonday prayer,
he went into that garden fair.
He found it shut up like a stone,
the gardener lulled by the harp's strains.
The garden reeled from that sweet song,
and from the beauties that there thronged.
Each tree had joined them in the dance;
the leaves refreshed, the fruits entranced.
The master, hearing these love-songs,
tore at his robe; no cup in hand,
No self-control to turn away,
no key to open up the gate.
He pounded loud, but no one answered;
roses asleep, cypresses dancing.
He ranged the garden's walls and sought
a way to enter; finding that
There was no entrance through his door,
he breached one through the wall's support.
He entered, so that he might watch,
and dance among them, Sufi-like;
That he might to this music listen
(pretending to inspect the garden),

See who was making this uproar,
how fared the garden and gardener.
Among the roses that he saw
making his garden bright that day,
He spied two jasmine-breasted maids,
nay, silver-limbed, who at the gate
Kept watch, that on those houri forms
like moons, no stranger's eye might come.
When he had entered through that hole,
the maidens found him rude and bold.
They thrashed him till they wore him out;
called him a thief, and bound him tight.
The master suffered their abuse,
fearing that he might be accused
Of wrong. With nails and fists they hit
and wounded him; then loud did shout:
'You garden-violater! There's
no one to guard the garden here!
For when one's garden's breached by thieves,
the gardener a good beating gives.
We, who beset you with our clubs,
were right to bind you hand and foot,
Since you have entered through a hole,
ignored the gate, and breached the wall.'
He said, 'Indeed, this garden's mine;
but for my act I bear the brand:
With gates that gape like lion's jaws,
why should I creep in like a fox?
Who enters his own land this way
will see its ruin one fine day.'
They sought from him some signs of proof,
and recognized him then in truth;
Seeing his evidence was true,
abuse was ceased, affection grew.
The garden's owner known to them,
their hearts were filled with love for him.
He comely, eloquent, and young:
all women lost who see these things.
They thought it fitting to make peace,
for with his nature they were pleased.
They loosed his hands and feet, and kissed
them lovingly, and sweetly asked
His pardon many times; became
his staunch supporters, loyal friends.
Then (for when foe becomes a friend,
a once-breached wall's made sound again),
With brambles they closed up the breach,
and freed themselves from robbers' reach.
They sat in friendship with the lord;
to him their lengthy story told:
'Within this garden, like the spring
in bloom, the lord rejoice therein!
There is a feast of moon-faced maids,
loving heart-ravishers, arrayed.
Each lovely woman in the town
whose beauty cheers the sight, is found
Ingathered here, like candles with no
smoke; fair pictures without flaw.
To make amends for all our ills,
for throwing dust in our own well,
Rise, stroll with us a while; fulfil
your heart's desire with whom you will.
Hide in some secret corner; there
observe these scattered roses fair.
Whichever idol your heart moves,
you give your love to, and approve,
We'll bring her to your hiding-place,
to serve you there with love and grace.'
When the lord heard this, in his heart
sleeping desire awoke, cried out.
Although by nature continent,
he was with passion well acquaint.
Manhood humanity beguiled;
a man, he bent to woman's wiles.
So, full of hope, he went with them
of jasmine breasts and silver limbs,
Until they came unto a place
which set the anxious heart at ease.
There rose before those heavenly maids
a chamber high, of dried bricks made.
He went inside and closed the door;
his guides then left. He saw a hole
In the front centre of the room,
through which a beam of bright light shone.
Through this hole's fount the master spied
rosy-faced maids with narrow eyes.
On every side were roses strewn:
sweet pomegranate-breasts, and limbs
Of silver had those maids, who lit
the eyes' lamps; sweeter than ripe fruit.
Each fair, as at her wedding feast,
made sweet song to excite the heart.
Dragon-like locks on treasures rested;
not tangerine- but orange-breasted.
Pomegranate breasts, and chins like sweet
cleft apples which were out of reach.
Gardens, indeed, lack not for such,
when gardeners are not unjust.
Amid that garden's verdure was
a grassy mead by a cypress grove.
There was a pool of marble there
to which Kawsar could not compare,
With water clear as tears therein,
and fishes who had never known harm.
Around that purest fountain grew
lilies, narcissus, jasmine too.

Those idols came, and saw their moons
among the fishes in the pond.
Warmed by the sun's heat, they had found
water as brilliant as the sun.
Gracefully to the pool they came,
and loosed their flowered wrappers' bands.
They doffed their robes, removed their veils,
entered the water, fair as pearls;
Splashed water on their silvery forms;
in black concealed their silver. Moons
And fish played in the pool; enflamed
the world with ardent passion. When
The moon its coins on water casts,
where is the fish that will not rise?
Their moons, with such heart-grasping grace,
coin-casting, stirred the master's fish.
A while they played, their hands clasped tight,
mocking the jasmine with their white;
A while they scattered pearls about,
and launched fair rounded fruits like boats.
Aping a serpent, one bold girl
cried out, 'A snake!' and tossed her curls.
Fair as white columns in Bisitun
(their Farhad with a sharp axe slain),
They filled the pool with milky streams
like those in Shirin's castle. When
The lord saw this, his patience fled.
What help? he had no friend or aid.
Like one who thirsts and, drunkens sees
water but cannot grasp it, he;
Or one with fits who sees the new moon,
sometimes leaps up, sometimes sits down.
He gazed at every cypress form
and saw there Resurrection's dawn.
His blood, aboil in every vein,
made all his limbs cry out in pain.
He stood there, hidden like a thief,
with what you know as you might think,
Wishing to leap among them, bold,
bird through the nook, snake through the hole:
Alas! his snake could not be bold;
why? from the narrowness of that hole.
Their rosy faces washed, those fair
like jasmine over bright silk flowered;
Then sky-blue silken robes put on,
and put to shame the sky's own moon.
Amongst them one fair harpist made
all blacks before her Rumi face.
A sun, her chin a crescent moon;
her lips a date tasted by none.
Each glance more swift and sharp than that
before; each smile more sugar-sweet.
Her burdened cypress put to shame
the pomegranate; hers lustre gained.
Her charms a thousand hearts had lured;
whoever saw her quick expired.
Whenever to her harp she sang,
love grew awake, and reason drunk.
The master, from afar, was more
bewitched than Hindus by light's glow.
Although each maiden was a moon,
among them she was like a queen.
The eremite strayed from his path.
Such unbelief! alas for faith!
Anon those two gazelle-eyed maids,
whose fur flashed bright with lightning's blaze,
Roused the musk-deer in that Cathay
and showed the cheetah swift his prey,
That slim gazelle. They came to speak
sweet words, and ply matchmaking tricks.
They found the master hidden there,
and, like door-keepers, questions fired:
'Amongst these idols,' houri-born,
to which of them do you incline?'
The master then described his love
to those two fair designers. Up
They leapt, his words were scarcely done,
like twin gazelles, nay, furious lions.
With magic spells they brought to him
that pert-maid, to the harp's strains.
By hidden ways, that none might see,
or, seeing, might those watchers flee,
They brought that wondrous maiden there,
and, yet more wondrous, locked the door!
The master knew not that his love
was willing, his task simply done;
That harpist who had hastened there
amenable to his affair.
Those two fair ones to her had told
the tale of that maid-loving lord;
And she, approving, had, unseen,
fastened her heart on him in turn,
Seeing him finer than they'd told;
his iron pure silver, his silver gold.
Impatient with desire, the lord
reproached that supple cypress; said,
'What is your name?' said she.
'The Evil Eye? Tis far from me.'
'What is your source? Tis purest light.'
'And what your place? The throne of might.'
'What is your veil?' Tis song,' said she.
'What is your mode?' Tis coquetry.'
'A kiss?' he begged; 'Sixty,' she said.
'Come, is it time? It is, indeed.'
'Will I attain you? Soon, she said.
'Gain my desire? 'You shall.' At this

The master burned in every limb;
all grace and shame abandoned him.
He grasped the maid's hair like her harp;
embraced her tightly like his heart.
Upon her sugared lips he rained
kisses and bites, ten score times ten.
Those heated kisses stirred his heart;
the heat gave keenness to his dart.
He longed to taste her sweet spring; break
the seal from off the Fount of Life.
When the black lion seized the wild ass;
drew her with force beneath his claws:
Their place was weak; beneath the strain
its bricks were breached. The ancient room
Came tumbling down; but righteous men's
affairs do not come to bad ends.
They 'scaped by but a hair, a tear;
one leapt one way, and one, in fear,
The other; so that none might spy
them on the path, they far did fly.
The lord, in pain and grief, retired;
crept in a corner, wept and sighed.
Among her friends the maiden sat,
her brows bound tight by sorrow's knots.
She called to mind her past distress,
and took the harp in her embrace.
When she brought forth her harp's lament,
lovers were maddened by her plaints.
She sang: 'My harp, with plaintive strings,
greetings to weary lovers brings.
A lover he who brooks fatigue,
bears weariness, endures defeat.
How long must I conceal my love?'
she loudly sang; 'I love, I love.
My passionate love has made me lose
control; the ardent lover knows
No patience; but though love demeans,
repentance is a greater sin.
Love cannot sing repentance's tune;
regret and true love cannot join.
The lover's he who gives his life;
what need he fear from sword or shaft?'
That Turkish harpist, scattering pearls
from rubies, thus her plight did tell;
And those two pearls who pulled the string,
to her sweet love-plaint listening,
Thought, 'From the garden a strong wind
has blown upon those bright lamps twain.'
They sought that lost Joseph to find,
and like Zulaykha to him clung.
They asked the truth of the affair;
the tale he told brought forth their tears.
At this affair they were dismayed,
and made new plans. 'Tonight,' they said,
'We'll make this place a home, nor shirk
what we owe you with others' work.
We'll make excuses; not allow
any to her own home to go,
That you may grasp within your arms,
quite firmly, your beloved moon.
Daylight exposes all; dark night
will guard the curtain, hinder light.
Saying these words, they went and made
some pretext to the other maids.
When night 'neath its black furs concealed
the day's bright Russian cloth-of-gold,
The nail's breadth of the sun effaced,
night's breastplate sprouted myriad rays;
Those maidens came and kept their word;
gave up that idol to the lord.
The thirsting cypress gained the stream;
bright sunlight joined with pale moonbeam.
An empty place, and such a love:
what man could then restrain himself?
The master, with his blood afire
in every vein, sought his desire.
Of that which from all should be hid,
I've told this; no more, God forbid!
But when the ruby sought to pierce
the pearl, and join them each to each:
A wild cat, crouching on a branch,
espied a bird, and quickly pounced
On it; and, crashing to the ground,
disturbed the lovers; in alarm
Each one sprang up, a fiery heat
within their hearts; with hastening feet
They parted, unfulfilled: observe
that raw dish, neither cooked nor served.
The sweet-lipped maid fled to her mates,
and played her harp throughout the night.
She plucked her harp and sweetly sang:
'The Judas-tree has flowered; 'tis spring.
The cypress risen to lofty stature;
the smiling rose its sugar scattered.
A nightingale perched on the bough;
love's commerce seemed broad day to show.
The gardener perfumed the bower;
a king came to observe it; saw
A beaker there, and took it up;
a falling stone shattered the cup.
You, who have left me all bereft,
'tis only you can make things right.
Although my actions bring me shame,
my heart won't hear of severing.'
Her mode of music made her friends
discern her secret. Once again

They went, lamenting, all about,
and finally sought the master out.
The master, like a thieving slave,
had found a secret hiding-place.
Beneath a narrow stream he crept,
'neath willow, poplar, cypress, box,
Bewildered at his unripe plans:
yellow wallflower from white jasmine sprung.
They sought from him what he concealed;
to them his story he revealed.
Those plotters took it on themselves
to reunite the two in love.
The maids returned, the path disclosed,
and sent the essence to the rose.
That loving songstress came and showed
renewed affection for her love.
He took her hand and went ahead,
until he found a likely bed.
The thick-spread branches of the trees
upon their heights formed many seats.
He hastened 'neath that kingly throne,
and made a place to sit upon.
With love that ravisher he pressed,
close as his own heart, to his breast.
That graceful cypress form, which might,
like jasmine, royal carpets deck.
He clasped her joyfully; thus rose
and cypress joined in passion close.
The master thus embraced his moon;
his hand was busy, unrestrained.
The master's piece a house had seized;
his partner had the stakes agreed.
But when he was about to take
the castle; fire with water slake,
A field mouse, from the branches high,
some hanging gourds did then espy,
Flew at the string, bird-like, and cut
the gourds' string with a single bite.
The gourds all crashed upon the ground,
each empty as a drum, and round.
Their sound was heard for miles; what drums!
that signal when departure comes.
The gourds kept up their clatter; thus
the deer escaped the lion's claws.
The master thought the bailiff come
to war with stones, the guard with drums.
He left his shoes, and ran pell-mell;
once more thought only of himself.
That idol fled, with thousand fears,
back to her music-loving peers.
When some time passed, the veil she rent
to sing a song of love's lament:
'Once on a time (so lovers say),
a lover went his love to see.
He sought to find (in great desire)
a happy union, joined with her;
As passion wills, to hold her close
(beside the cypress grows the rose);
The apples of her chin to eat;
taste pomegranates from her breast;
Extend his hand to her pearl-store,
and open up the treasure's door;
With sugar-loaf mix sugar; shed
the tulip's blood with willow red.
Disturbance brought a mighty clash
and clamour; thus their hopes were dashed:
The moth still yearning for the light,
the thirsting far from the Water of Life.
O you whose moves are all unfair,
now make your moves with proper care.
You give me but discords; 'tis wrong;
but true to you will be my song.'
When she had sung this song, her mates,
true confidants, perceived her state.
Seeking to make amends, they found
the master, stretched out on the ground;
Ashamed, his heart distraught, he lay
exhausted, on the earth. When they,
With sympathy and kindness great,
had raised him from his fallen state,
They asked, 'What's wrong?' He told a tale
that would produce cold sighs in Hell.
Those plotters, by their strategies,
set his bad thoughts once more at ease.
The bonds that bound his heart they loosed;
encouraged him with promises.
'Be wiser henceforth, if you will;
you love; but be more loving still.
When the time comes, a nest prepare
where no calamity will dare.
We, from afar, will keep our watch;
like sentinels we'll guard your path.'
Then to his lover they returned
(that rosy-cheeked, fair cypress form);
Once more, Turk-like, she sallied forth,
the master found, and soothed his heart.
She came to him, his grief assuaged;
he put all mastery aside,
Clung to her curls like one who's drunk,
and sought within the garden some
Retreat. He found a place, remote,
where jasmine made a dome of light,
Against a wall its banner raised;
above, a wood; below, a cave.
The master found no better place;
he made his workshop in its midst.

He brushed the jasmine branch aside,
and drew the maiden safe inside.
He loosed her shirt, and all shame fled
(what other bands, cannot be said).
He clasped a heap of roses; held
almonds in sugar. Yet the rod
Had not yet in collyrium dipped,
when the bent sphere played one more trick.
Some foxes, deep inside the cave,
together went in search of prey.
A wolf had closed the way behind,
to separate them from their kin.
The foxes, from that ravening wolf
(an evil dreadful to behold!),
The wolf behind them, quickly fled,
their path, over the master's bed.
Over those schemers two they ran,
foxes before and wolf behind.
The master's court had crumbled down;
he saw an army; with a bound
Leapt up; not knowing what was what,
covered with dirt, he ran about,
His heart disturbed, his mind aflame,
seeking to leave that bower soon.
Those cypress-forms appeared, who'd given
so many fruits and flowers to him.
They grasped his lover by her skirt
(a precious pearl between two sharks),
And screamed at her: 'What are these tricks?
What demon is it that afflicts
Your nature? How long try this youth?
Your treachery has killed his love!
No one who for him friendship feigns
would play a stranger such a game.
How many times tonight you've fled!
How many tricks and spells you've played!'
She made excuses, swore them true;
they would not hear the tale from her,
Until the master came and found
his candle 'twixt two snuffers, shamed
By their reproofs, and taking slaps
from this one, and sharp blows from that.
He said, 'Beware! take off your hands!
Don't torment an unhappy friend!
No wrong's been done me by this moon;
you must play her a better tune.
If in this treachery there was sin,
against the guilty raise your hands.
Her nature from all sin is free;
what sin there was came from this clay.
In this world, those who clever are
and quick, are slaves before the pure.
God's grace, eternal and divine,
save us from being harmed by sin.
And my defective reason: those
calamities removed its flaws.
Since Fortune gave me continence,
it guarded me from such a sin.
He who's not mastered by a devil
is good; and no good man does evil;
But he who for the unlawful yearns,
saving your presence, is baseborn.
With such a peri-visaged bride
no true man could her love avoid;
Especially a man who's young,
manly, and passionate. But when
Chastity bars the way to him,
no man can keep pursuing sin.
No one can eat fruit from the tree
that's gazed on by the Evil Eye.
The eyes of hundred beasts were on
us two; thus we became undone.
Let's say no more; what's done is done;
and let's not ruin what we've won.
Public and private, I repent,
and am with God's decree content:
That if my Hour be delayed,
and if I still may hunt this prey,
I'll make of her my lawful wife,
and serve her ever through my life.'
Seeing things thus the plotters, awed
by his God-fearing, quickly bowed
Their heads before him in the dust:
'May such pure faith in one be praised
In whom are sown the seeds of good;
who from bad nature is preserved.
How many trials which brought great grief
were seen as trials, but bore relief.
How many pains men sorely try
in which is the soul's remedy.'
The beauties ceased their coquetry,
amazed at the sphere's puppetry.
When light's fount from the hills sprang high,
it drove away the Evil Eye;
And, like the astrolabe's spider, dawn
over the earth's pole its fine web spun.
A breeze arose with lamp in hand,
and bore the gardener to the town.
He raised his flag in mastery,
released from bonds and slavery.
His mind had boiled from the flame
of last night's passion. When he came
To town, he loyally contrived
to seek his goal. He brought his bride,
That last night's moon, unto his bed;
fulfilled the vows of those who wed;

With coral pierced the pearl unbored;
his fish slept; wakeful grew dawn's bird.
Wherever you look, from fish to bird,
all are by lawful passion stirred.
What fortune! he clear water gained,
and when it was made lawful, drank.
He found a fountain clear as the sun,
as silver white, pure as jasmine.
From white does the day's brilliance come;
from white the world-illuming moon.
All hues with artifice are stained,
except for white, which pure remains.
He who despairs when stained will be,
when pure, called 'white' by all who see.
In worship, when men strive for right,
it is the custom to wear white.
The jasmine-scented maid now done,
the king embraced her as his own.
Many such nights he went and stayed
within each dome, in joy and ease.
Before him this dome-building sky
the Seven Domes' doors threw open wide.
39.
Description of Spring.
When, Jupiter and Saturn in trine,
the planets' king left Fish for Ram,
The Khizr-like verdure sprouted fresh,
and the springs found the Stream of Life:
Each well-spring gushed a heavenly Nile;
each path led to a Salsabil.
The sandal earth was garbed in musk;
the wind's trade in that scent grew brisk.
The New Year's temperate air went straight;
suffused the world with brilliant light.
For the sweet herbs the New Year's breeze
had pledged its life, by a new lease.
From the earth's heart the green shoots thrust
their heads; sun's disk was cleansed of rust.
The air's skirt freshest dew unfurled;
warmth bathed the limbs of bitter cold.
The camphor snow from passes high
shed brilliant tears over rivers dry.
The plants, to eyes like brilliant jewels,
gave fertile verdure to the world.
The fresh narcissus' langourous eyes
stole sleep from any who could see.
The morning breezes' musky breaths
perfumed the violet's dark dress.
The cypress shade formed canopies,
and combed the locks of the box-trees.
The lotus, which the sun made sleep,
fled for its life to water's keep.
Fresh buds on branches high unfurled,
like tulip-petals, scattered pearls.
Lilies, for the narcissus' crown,
held golden ingots in their palms.
The fragrant ox-eyes scattered stars
without the Resurrection. Tears
Assailed the fenugreek, which ate
of saffron, laughed again. A writ
The rose, with the Water of Life, inscribed
(like Scripture) to shed poppies' blood.
The white-rose petals strung their pearls;
the lily stems applied their kohl.
The mouse-ear, like a Daylamite,
cast curl on curl upon its back.
Both leaves and grass contented were,
one carpet and the other shears.
With musky blooms, the hyacinth
loosed its sharp fragrance over the pink.
The wallflower had made a pact
that jasmine be its heir. The scent
Of wild mint, heady, melted down
the sting of heaven's Scorpion.
Rose-buds romanced ox-eyes; dawn's bird
breathed secrets in the elephant-ear.
The camphor-scented musk-rose wore
silver and gold like lovers' ears.
Like aloes-wood, the tamarisk
spread sometimes camphor, sometimes musk.
Judas and jasmine raised their flags
before the willow, white and red.
Stricken by autumn wind's cruel barbs,
the willow trees put out fresh buds.
The rose put on a sovereign's belt;
both earth and wind in fealty knelt.
The nightingale sang like a drum
throughout the night, till cock-crow came.
On fields of green the rose's red
the fivefold royal fanfare played.
On cypress trees the ring-doves' plaint,
like lute-song, soothed the tender heart;
The turtle-doves with morning wail,
like flutes, stole laughter from the quail.
About the fields, the francolin
cried like a Paradisal poem.
The reader of the heavenly Zand
at night its holy words intoned;
From its shrill cries that nightingale
had grown, like harp-strings, slim and frail.
The garden like a picture limned,
both bird and fish rejoiced therein.
40.
How Bahram Learned of the Chinese Ruler's Second Invasion and of the Army's Revolt.
On such a day did King Bahram
in royal style a feast illume,

And, like his seven pavilions, raise
another higher than the sky.
A burdened messenger arrived
and sought that tent, which had six sides;
On entering that heavenly place,
his heart swelled vast as Paradise.
He praised the prince; and, having done,
bowed low before the royal throne
And said, 'Once more, from templed Chin,
an army's tumult has arisen.
Faghfur has set at nought his oath;
once more departed from good faith.
The Chinese keep no pact; within
they're poison, though they honey seem.
Their troops, with swords to Heaven raised,
have reached the Oxus, wave on wave.
A flood has overwhelmed the plain,
each monster like a sea therein.
If the king be not watchful, they'll
soon drink our blood in brimming bowls.'
The king, learning of this sedition,
sought for a way to heal affliction.
Before the trap could close on him,
he left the cup, abstained from wine.
He plotted how he could destroy,
with judgement sure, the enemy.
He needed troops and treasury,
for both are tools of victory.
An empty treasury he found,
and troops and weapons scattered round;
He, helpless as a toothless lion,
his realm a gaol, his collar a chain.
I've heard the king had a vizier
who, far from God, did not Him fear.
He called himself (in wishful thought)
Rast-Rawshan; was not straight nor bright.
Both light and straightness did he lack:
his straightness bent, his brightness dark.
He tricked the king with his good name,
while he himself earned evil fame.
His office, when in Narsi's hands,
was filled with fear of God; but when
Rast-Rawshan seized the vizierate,
rightness and brightness perished straight.
While the king drank and sported, he
oppressed; aroused disloyalty;
Destroyed the public welfare; strained
to gather wealth, amass much land.
The king's vicegerent he seduced
by alchemy of gold and jewels.
'The people', he said, 'are filled with greed;
they've grown bold, mannerless, and rude.
Those comforts, given to make them full,
they've used against us; if we will
Not punish them with wit and sense,
the Evil Eye will punish us.
Bad men, of evil nature, all:
false Josephs worse than dogs and wolves.
Wolves must be trapped and tightly bound;
how long shall they, like foxes, dance?
Although they're earthlings, of earth born,
they're wild beasts in the forms of men.
Wild beasts for faith have no regard;
they'll not submit, save by the sword.
You've read, in books, what Siyavash
had suffered from such savage beasts;
How they Jam's glory overthrew,
and how the great Darius slew.
Their wealth's a pool, and they are full;
so water standing in a pool
Stagnates; but murky water, when
earth filters it, grows sweet again.
Sober the foe, if the king's drunk;
though the watch sleep, the thief's awake.
For when the king forgets the rod,
his kingship will be ruined; but
From one who punishment decrees
both enemies and demons flee.
Bold subjects are like demons; let
them be, their bounds they'll overstep.
Be sure, with your chastisement, you
harm not the brilliance of your rule.
Don't trust the friendly acts of men;
know only your own sword as friend.
The king, who trusts us, worships wine;
you hold the sword, and I the pen.
From you force, from me strategy;
now seize whomever I may say.
Punish the rich man through his wealth;
deal with the poor by blood; for both
Good men and bad are lawful; take
the good man's wealth, the bad man's life.
Abase all men with wealth and place,
and grow exalted in their eyes.
With subjects lowly and abased,
dominion will be firmly based.'
The deputy, drunk at these words,
joined with him in his cruel deeds.
In harsh oppression shown the way,
he harassed the king's subjects; preyed
Upon them, till he went beyond
all bounds; held no man anyone.
In their oppression they stood fast,
seized men and stole all they possessed.
Village and town heard nought but cries:
this man arrested, that wealth seized;

Till, by a year's time, in that realm,
no one retained his land or wealth.
Rast-Rawshan, from both small and great,
unjustly stole both right and bright.
Slaves male and female, gold, and gems
were left to no one in the realm.
Thus lack of money, not its use,
rich men to poverty reduced.
Householders, from those burglars' wrongs,
found their own homes in others' hands.
Citizens, soldiers, outcasts all,
roamed, tired and worn, from hill to hill.
Throughout the land no cow nor field
remained; none could record a yield.
The realm in grievous ruin lay,
and empty the king's treasury.
Save the vizier, with house and wealth,
no one reaped ought but toil and grief.
When, readying for war, the king,
lacked wealth and troops, he felt great pain.
From his informers, one by one,
he sought this ruin's cause; but none,
Dreading the world-burning vizier's might,
would tell by day what passed at night.
Each one advanced some false pretext:
'This one grew poor; another fled;
The land gives no return; no grain
is there; therefore no wealth remains.
From lack of work and ready cash,
there's no one left to pay his tax.
If the king show mercy, they'll return
and go about their work again.'
Though this did not convince the king,
he did not haste to beard the lion
With ill-timed war, but pondered on
the evil of the cruel dome.
He found no way to mend his state;
left off his struggle against Fate.
41.
How Bahram Came to the Hut of the Old Shepherd.
Unhappy at these straits, the king
would go out hunting, all alone.
He'd hunt, and grow more cheerful; then,
with lighter heart, he'd turn towards home.
When, on that day, grief gripped his reins,
he longed to seek the prey; he went
Alone to hunt, to wash the blood
from out his heart, with crimson flood.
Whatever quarry he desired
he took; bound grief and care; then, tired
From hunting leopard, lion, and boar,
he turned back towards his home once more.
His brain was all afire with thirst
From his quick rushes in the hunt.
He ranged that region all around;
the more he sought, the less he found.
Some smoke he spied, like dragon black,
head raised, the full moon to attack,
Writhing in coils and billowing high,
preparing to assault the sky.
He thought, 'If smoke from fire doth wind,
from its kindler I must water find.'
When towards that smoke the king drew nigh,
he saw a humble tent raised high;
A flock of sheep, from hoof to ear
stewing like meat in the sun's glare;
And from a tree's tall branch there hung
a dog, his limbs all tightly bound.
Towards the tent he urged his mount;
saw an old man like kindly dawn.
The old man rose, seeing his guest;
prepared to serve him as was best.
Like humble earth he waited on
his guest, and held the reins of Heaven.
He offered him great praises first,
then helped him dismount from his horse.
Whatever food he had prepared
he brought for him, and gently said:
'Without a doubt, this poor repast
does not befit a noble guest;
But we are far from humans here;
excuse it, if the meal is poor.'
When the king saw his bits of bread,
he asked for water, left the food.
He said, 'I'll only eat when you
answer my question right and true:
Why has this dog (the house's lion)
helplessly, like a wolf, been bound?'
The old man said, 'O handsome youth,
I'll tell you what has passed, in truth:
This dog was my flock's guardian;
I trusted my affairs to him.
Loyal and trustworthy was he;
I, happy in his company;
For through the years he kept all safe
from wolf's sharp claws and grasping thief.
I made him watchdog of my home;
called him not dog, but guardian.
He, day and night, was my iron arm,
with teeth and claws that all foes burned.
If I went from the plain to town,
I knew my flock was safe with him;
And if my work in town dragged on,
'twas he who'd bring the flock back home.
For several years he was my guard,
played straight, and acted as he should;

Till one day, in my reckoning,
I counted up the flock; I found
That seven sheep were missing; gone;
I feared an error in my sums;
Next week I counted up again,
again fell short; I told no one.
I watched with care and caution, but
I found no one that I could fault.
Though for some nights I kept a watch,
I never could the culprit catch;
But that dog knew much more than I,
and kept a far more watchful eye.
When yet again I counted up,
like the first day, it still came short.
All night my mind felt great distress,
because my flock kept growing less.
They disappeared by fives and tens,
like ice that's melted by the sun,
Until the alms-collector came
and took as alms those that remained.
I, desert-dwelling, now became
a shepherd, after having owned
Great flocks. That suffering humbled me,
and caused me heartfelt misery.
I thought, "If this breach issues from
the Evil Eye, what beast has done
The deed? With such a lion-like dog,
who'd brave a guardian so bold?"
Until one day, beside a stream,
I dozed; and, waking from my dream,
Just as I was, with my head bowed
over my staff, I silent stood.
I saw a wolf bitch from afar
approach; the dog grew weak before
That wolf. She called, in dog-like tongue;
the dog ran to her like a friend.
He ran around her, raising dust;
now wagged his tail, and now his mace.
At last he mounted her, and took
his pleasure; the affair was lost:
He went and slept, and rested well;
his mouth by secrecy was sealed.
The wolf, who'd given her bribe, now sought
the due reward her service bought.
A strong ram, leader of the flock,
whose fat tail weighed it down, she took
And carried off; devoured it quick;
she'd eaten many bribes like that.
The cursed dog, by his lust driven,
to the wolf's care the flock had given;
The flock in payment gave away,
to settle up for lustful play.
For several times I pardoned him;
left him alone, although he'd sinned;
I caught him with the wolf at last,
and tied him up for that trespass;
Punished him with imprisonment,
that he might grow obedient.
My dog a wolf in ambush deep
became, nay, butcher of my sheep.
He trust with treason did repay:
to traitor sold his charge away.
'Tis fitting that, until he die,
he never from his bonds go free.
Whoso with wrongdoers in like ways
deals not, let no one give him praise.'
King Bahram, when these words he heard,
perceived in them a lesson hid.
When he had grasped those symbols, then
he ate, and hastened to the town.
'From this old shepherd I have learned
(he thought) true kingship; clever plan!
My human exemplar is thus:
I'm shepherd, and my subjects flock.
If the foundation is not sound,
in one of trust the breach is found.
My sharp-sighted vizier, he that
I trusted to protect my flock:
Let him tell me what caused this ruin,
from whom did this destruction come.'
Returning to the town, he asked
the officials for the prisoners' list;
And when he close examined it,
the day grew blacker than the writ.
Amazed, he found a world of pain,
each victim's name there written plain.
He thought, 'In mourning and in feasts,
the king kills, the vizier forgives.
His tyranny brings me ill fame;
puts good repute in his own name.'
The king knew well the plot: the thief
within the house, who'd bear it off;
Just like that dog who gave the flock
to wolf; distressed that shepherd Kurd.
(Dogs are by nature never fair;
they make an outcry as they tear.)
He deemed it best to have him seized,
and let him languish some ten days.
He thought, 'If I should leave him in
his high post, none will bring forth pen
'Gainst him; but, strip him of his might:
bright light shows best in darkest night.'

42.
How Bahram Tried his Vizier.

At dawn, when shining day grew light,
dark night rolled up its carpet tight.

Dawn, with one stroke of its two swords,
sated the moon with its dark blood.
Bahram set up his court against
the sky, thrown open to all men.
From all the land the nobles came,
drawn up according to their rank.
Rast-Rawshan entered through the gate,
and boldly went to his high seat.
The king regarded him with wrath;
shouted (it nearly caused his death!):
'You, who have ruined my domain;
destroyed the kingdom's honoured name;
Who've stuffed your store with jewels rare,
and scattered my wealth everywhere;
Deprived my army of its needs,
so that both wealth and glory fled;
My subjects' homes unjustly robbed;
planted your feet in each man's blood;
Instead of lawful taxes, took
from men now riches and now rank:
You have forgotten gratitude;
have you no shame before your lord?
Ingratitude is worse in faith
than irreligion. To requite
The favours that a man receives,
to him still greater blessings gives.
What light, what truth, have you displayed?
brightness has vanished, truth has fled.
You've ruined treasury and men;
now neither wealth nor troops remain.
What did you think? that, drinking, I
would sleep, and in a stupor lie?
That you'd disarm the drunkard's hand,
cripple my subjects? If Bahram,
Grasping the cup, forgets the sword,
may dust upon his head be poured.
If wine and music bring me cheer,
I'll not forget the azure sphere.'
Of such words he made myriad yokes,
and laid them on the vizier's neck.
He ordered that a guardsman fell
drive him from Paradise to Hell.
With his own turban tightly bound,
they dragged him off and fettered him.
His legs in fetters, arms in chains:
no vizier this, but one who's sinned.
When might against that mighty one
was brought, the king a crier sent
To town: 'Let the oppressed complain,'
he cried; 'seek justice from the king.'
When citizens and soldiers heard,
they made their way to the king's court;
Of that base wretch's evil told;
with serpent's bane that dragon slew.
The king gave the command: that those
imprisoned should make known their woes;
Reveal the crimes of which accused,
to forge a key their chains to loose.
The prisoners, freed from their bonds,
approached, more than a thousand strong.
The king chose seven men from them,
and asked of each, 'What is your crime?
Of what are you accused? From whence
have you come here? what your descent?'
43.
The First Victim's Tale.
The first addressed said to Bahram,
'May your foes perish! Rast-Rawshan,
With great abuse, by torture killed
my brother; seized and plundered all
He had, belongings, mounts, and goods
he took; his life and wealth destroyed.
All grieved the loss of life of one
who was so handsome and so young.
When I cried out in protest, he
for the same crime arrested me;
Said, "He gave comfort to our foe;
a traitor he, and so are you.
He signalled to a savage Ghur,
his slave, who plundered my house too;
Bound me with fetters forcibly,
and made my house a grave for me.
He wrongly took that brother's life;
condemned this one to living death.
I've been imprisoned for a year;
my sovereign's face now brings me cheer.'
When Bahram, from that victim's words,
learned of his vizier's evil deeds,
All that he'd stolen was returned;
his brother's blood-wit paid to him.
He freed him, put him at his ease;
restored him to his former place.
44.
The Second Victim's Tale.
The second man his homage gave
unto the gentle king; then said,
'My garden overflowed with plants,
whose sight brought brightness to the heart.
A Paradisal carpet, green
and broad; fruits from its branches hung.
It gave me spring in autumn drear;
a memory of my father dear.
One day that tyrant, all aflame
with greed, unto my garden came.
I treated him to fruit and wine,
and suitably did entertain

The man; all in both bower and house
in gratitude before him placed.
He slept and rested, ate and laughed,
and drank as much wine as he wished.
He strolled around the garden; waxed
quite wild with longing to possess.
"Sell me your garden," he said then;
"prosperity to you I'll bring."
"How can I sell this garden? Nay,
it is as dear as life to me.
Each man has some great passion; mine,
poor wretch, this garden, fair and fine.
Consider it as yours always,
and I your gardener, nay, your slave.
Hasten to it when you're inclined;
eat fruit; beside its stream drink wine.
Whatever my poor kitchen has,
a lovely slave will to you serve."
"Leave off! don't make pretexts," said he;
"sell it, and take your things away."
We argued bitterly a while;
I would not sell for force or gold.
At last, inflamed with rage, he made
false charges; for that crime, he seized
My garden, through his treachery,
and left me in deep poverty;
And then, so that I might not bring
this wrong to trial before the king,
Imprisoned me in great distress,
and kept things hidden for two years.'
The king gave him a garden, fields,
and house as beauteous as Baghdad.
45.
The Third Victim's Tale.
The third man spoke: 'O king, who
have whatever you desire; your slave
Was once a merchant on the sea;
I earned my livelihood that way.
Sometimes I sought the coast, and found
great profits there. When I grew known
For knowledge of the good and bad
of sea-pearls, finally I acquired
Some pearls, lustrous and radiant,
as brilliant as the morning's lamp.
I came to town well satisfied,
my eyes by that pearl-string made bright.
I sought to sell that pearl-string; buy
my food and clothing with its price.
When the vizier heard that I owned
a necklace of fine pearls, he sent
For me and bought them, feigning shame,
so that I lowered the price for him.
But when it came the time to pay,
he made excuses, sought delay;
I sought my money, sore distressed;
he gave me nought but cold pretexts.
For a few days, with guile and fraud,
he played with me, while I still hoped;
Till he, in secret, summoned me,
with murderers imprisoned me.
He made a pretext of my crime,
and kept his money; in exchange
For my rare necklace, which he stole,
he bound my limbs with irons cold.
He seized my gems; while I became,
from his vile tortures, like a stone.
He pearls within his turban hid;
I, shell-like, dwelt within a pit
Three years in chains; but now content,
since my eyes the king's face have seen.'
The king, from that base vizier's hoard,
returned the pearls, and added gold.
46.
The Fourth Victim's Tale.
The fourth man, trembling greatly, said,
'O king, who merits countless praise:
I am a minstrel, young, in love;
as sweet as flowing streams my lute.
I had a love, of beauty rare;
a Chinese maid, my comforter.
Her sunny love stole the moon's light;
the envy she of day and night.
Her tiny mouth gave name to "nought"
her smile broke sugar-cones to bits.
Beauty she stole from fair-faced spring,
which faded by comparison.
Though bought for money in my land,
her blessing caused my eyes to shine.
From me she'd learned to sing and play;
charming and pleasing were her lays.
We dwelt together, warm in love,
like candle flame and fluttering moth.
She lit my heart like night the lamp;
she, in my bower, like grass, content.
So bright and light, a candle she
that Rast-Rawshan took far from me,
And kindled in his palace; burned
with flames of grief the moth's sore heart.
Distressed at separation's night,
I sought a path towards her light.
He, mocking, had me bound; implied
that I was mad; he, with the bride
He'd taken from me, dwelt at ease,
and I in prison, with dire need.
For four years, wrongfully, he kept
me, innocent, in abject state,'

The king returned the maid to him
at once, with many other things.
He gave his wedding-price, and freed
him from his bonds, with his fair bride.
47.
The Fifth Victim's Tale.
The fifth man spoke: 'O mighty king,
to whose high tent the sphere is joined:
I head a certain custom-house,
and serve the king's good fortune. Once,
My work was to adorn the land
and serve the king, obedient.
By the king's fortune, God did grant,
through wealth and state, magnificence
And ease; that the king live prosperous,
I drowned the world in happiness.
I made provision for the road
from prayers; for the king's sake did good.
I made new every town and street;
all men of wisdom sought me out.
Seeking to make the kingdom thrive,
each man his daily bread I gave.
Through me the straitened gained great wealth;
widows, their children too, were filled.
To all who sought, I granted gold;
I grasped the hand of all who fell.
No helpless one remained in bonds,
without my freeing him from harm.
Whatever income I received
from the dihqans, I spent on guests.
Income, expense, both as they should:
well pleased with me both men and God.
But when the vizier heard my tale,
injustice's pot began to boil.
He took my stewardship from me,
and seized my wealth and property.
"You have not earned this wealth (he said)
by toil; your largesse far exceeds
Your wealth; you've practised alchemy,
or gained great treasure in some way.
Give me my portion, as is due;
deliver, or I'll ruin you."
All of the means which I possessed
he seized upon this crude pretext,
And then abased me, who had been
my own man, binding me in chains.
Five years, within this jail, I've been
far from my children and my home.'
The king commanded he return,
in wealth and ease, to his domain.
48.
The Sixth Victim's Tale.
When the count reached the sixth, the wine
of justice healed his fortune's pain.
He blessed the king; 'O lord,' he said,
'whose virtue gives men's daily bread:
I am a soldier and a Kurd,
through my forebears of noble birth.
I am the sovereign's soldier brave;
my father too was the king's slave.
I serve the king, loyal and true,
as did my father; I pursue
My sovereign's foes unceasingly,
with life and sword in hand. To me,
By his great grace the king did grant,
from his domains, a bit of land;
I worked it for my livelihood
in happiness, and loyal served.
That cruel vizier seized it from me;
no one can withstand tyranny.
I had a family, but no wealth
or property, except that field.
Time and again I begged him loud,
"Assist me, for the sake of God,"
That he might render justice, and
be merciful to me and mine,
Or, like retired soldiers, give
a pension from the treasury.
He cried at me, "Be silent! Scrub
the rust from your own arrowheads!
The king with no one knows discord,
that he might worry or make war;
No enemy is at his gates,
that he might call his troops to fight.
Do not sit idle; you are strong
and healthy; go and labour then.
If you have nought, don't strive for more,
but sell your saddle, horse, and gear."
"Beware the demon's ways," I said;
"see my misfortune, and fear God.
Do not, through loss and poverty,
give pain to a poor wretch like me.
You've slept in comfort every night,
while I have drawn my sword to fight.
You rule the kingdom by the pen;
I with the sword the realm defend.
You dip your pen in the army's blood;
'gainst the king's foes I draw the sword.
Don't take that which the king has given,
or I'll soon take my suit to him."
These words inflamed him; at me then
he threw his inkwell (I'd no pen).
"You stupid fool, who make me threats
with justice's water., Me, a clod?
Now you call me a hypocrite,
Now threaten me with the king's might.

I placed the king upon his throne;
without my writ no deed is done.
The heads of sovereigns lie beneath
my feet; all live but for my sake.
Did they not treat me as a friend,
vultures would feast upon their brains."
He said this; threw the inkwell; seized
my horse, effects, and weapons; me
Dispatched with murderers to dwell,
imprisoned in his own stout gaol.
For nigh six years, nay, more, my mind
is anxious, and my soul in pain.'
The king gave to him robes and gear,
may gracious rulers long endure!
And, having made the man rejoice,
his land's return twofold increased.
49.
The Seventh Victim's Tale.
The seventh victim came; he bowed
before the king, thanked him, and said,
'I have renounced the world; I tread
the ascetic's path, and worship God.
Though poor, my vision's broad, just like
a candle; I consume myself
Before mankind; and since I've learned
the end is death, forsake this world.
Of food nor sleep I have no share;
I watch by night, and fast by day.
No food by day, for I have none;
no sleep by night, since I've no home.
I dwell within a holy place;
in nought but worship spend my days.
I seek to please all whom I find,
and pray for all I call to mind.
The vizier summoned me; I went;
he sat me at a distance; said,
"I am suspicious of you; if
I make you suffer, it is fit."
"O lord, what do you doubt in me,
that I may live as you decree?"
"I fear your evil prayers," he said,
"and I will seek your death from God,
Lest, out of rancour and despite,
you call down curses on my might.
From those night vigils, I do fear,
your shaft will find this target. Ere
Your hatred's fire shall bring to me
the fell spark of your curse, I'll tie
Your hands, that you may nought beseech
in prayer; nay, more, I'll bind your neck."
Without remorse he bound me tight,
and grieved not at my soul's sad plight;
For seven years of torment, cast
me in the stocks, my feet bound fast;
My hands as well so tightly bound
I could not lift them up to Heaven.
He bound the prayers of my hands;
but I against him bound the realm.
He prisoned me by devious trick;
but I have broken down his keep.
Now God has brought me to the king;
his mercy to me joy will bring.'
The king embraced the holy man,
that infidel-destroying lion.
'Save for that fear of prayer,' he said,
'Rast-Rawshan never spoke the truth.
But prayers are not prevented thus,
nor pious men dealt with like thieves.
Whatever that evil man has wrought,
he curses on himself has brought,
Until those curses, in the end,
stole both his turban and his head.'
All the vizier possessed, the king
bestowed upon the holy man;
But he renounced those worldly goods,
like the unburdened sky, and said,
'I need no worldly wealth; bestow
better than this, as I have you.'
Then, dancing to no music's score,
he disappeared; none saw him more.
Thus were the Travellers on the Path:
their heads have rubbed the sky from earth.
But those base men, though Adam's kin,
are demons all, and not true men.
To find mature wine in the cup
you must see many unripe grapes.
The river's waves which raging swell
with water from small streams grow full.
He is mature who will withdraw
both sleeve and skirt from those so raw.
50.
How Bahram Killed the Unjust Vizier.
When the earth shook clay's shadow from
its dusty carpet on the sun,
The king, in this brick-kiln, from care
was like damp bricks. To mend affairs,
He sought a method to remove
the thorn's sharp harshness from the rose.
He pondered the world's tyranny,
and sought, through justice, remedy.
When that vizier he called to mind,
thoughtful, he laid his head on hand.
He did not sleep till dawn from shame,
nor did he close his eyes from pain.
When, in this earthen pot, the sun's
bright fount had basil sown, the king,

Like basil that's refreshed with rain,
strewed justice's flowers on thirsting men.
He ordered that his throne be raised;
set up a scaffold by the gate.
Enthroned, he gave his audience;
his nobles stood by, sword in hand.
His kingdom's nobles he did seat;
spurred justice's camel to the heights.
A mighty mass he gathered there
of men, his justice to observe.
That tyrant vizier, tightly bound
from head to foot in chains, he hung
Alive upon the gibbet; showed
no mercy, so that, like a thief,
He died in shame. 'Who lifts his head
thus, Fate will cast him down,' he said.
'From treachery comes a bad name,
from evil-doing a bad end.
A tyrant who does so much hurt:
just men will bury him. Say not
That justice lacks support; both earth
and Heaven are about this work.
He who brings nails and boards will find
he's nailed himself to his own plank.'
This show of justice done, Bahram
recalled the shepherd, wolf, and dog;
Summoned that shepherd; gave him rule;
good fortune and success bestowed.
He took all harshness from his reign;
allowed no tyranny; this plan
Within a little while did turn
to silk his sackcloth, gold his iron.
His troops and treasure passed all count;
surpassed the sea, overtopped the mount.
51.
How the Chinese Ruler Sent his Apologies to Bahram.
When news of this reached the Khaqan,
he soon withdrew, and caused no harm;
An envoy came with his excuse;
his words were nought that would not please:
'He who deserved death, whom the king
killed, was a rebel, bent upon
Sedition. Summoning us, he wrote
a letter which bewitched the heart,
Till, with deceptive wiles, he stole
all prudence from our simple soul.
He said, "The mine is full of gold;
the way is empty; haste, be bold.
The king's so drunk he lacks the wits
to throw cold water on his face.
In friendship I'm prepared to serve;
homage from me, from you the sword."
But when I heard of the king's deeds,
I knew I must act opposite.
In peace and war alike, the king
does ever that which should be done.
I'm still his humble slave; of Chin
at home, but Ethiop to him.
My daughter's handmaid of your house;
my crown, before your threshold, dust.'
All that the traitor, seeking ruin,
had writ, complaining, of the king:
Those scrolls, rolled up, he then sent on,
by messenger, unto the king.
Reading those letters, King Bahram
grew sharper than a scribe's sharp pen;
Thanked God that the vizier was slain,
and kept good order from then on.
When Justice's face, in the king's eyes,
made him aware of black and white,
He made, before her beauteous face,
his seven beauties sacrifice.
He rooted up all fancies; bent
his heart on her, and was content.
52.
The End of Bahram's Affair; How He Disappeared into the Cave.
He who joins rubies to these pearls;
who's loaded the world's ears with jewels,
Said: When the Seven Domes, with wine
and cup, resounded for Bahram,
Reason, within his dome-like brain,
gave knowledge of this moving dome:
'Avoid the temples of earth's dome,
that ruin avoid you.' The high dome
Of the king's brain began to boil,
that he'd been charmed by idle tales.
He saw that this dome rolls all up
at last; turns mortal domes to dust.
He left the Seven Domes to the sky,
and towards another took his way:
A dome which death won't tumble; where
the enraptured rest till Judgement Day.
He summoned seven priests, the sons
of priests, and charged to each a dome.
In each, at once, a fire he kindled;
that is, made each a fire-temple.
That cypress tall, to sixty come,
saw jasmine on his violets bloom.
He turned, sincere, to worship God,
and worship of himself left off.
One day he set aside his crown
and throne; went with his lords to hunt.
All others bent on worldly prey;
but hunting for himself was he.
The army, scattered wide, gazelles
brought down, and wild asses felled.

They sought the with ass of the plain,
but he, the lonely grave to gain.
He sought a grave in which to dwell:
gazelles, but from himself, did fell.
From this salt plain gazelle, wild ass,
seek not: one tomb, the other vice.
At last, from desert side appeared
a wild ass, towards the Ass-King veered.
That angel beast, the king knew then,
would set him on the path to Heaven.
He urged his horse towards the beast,
spurring to action his swift steed.
After his prey he sped in haste,
through ruined spots and desert waste.
His swift-paced steed had taken wing;
but one or two slaves followed him.
That waste land held a cave, more sweet
than an ice well in summer's heat,
In it a deep chasm, like a well;
the way therein no man could tell.
Into that cave the wild ass ran;
the king pursued her like a lion.
He spurred his horse within, and gave
his kingly treasure to the cave.
Under its veil the king embraced
the One Companion of the Cave.
Those pages guarding him stopped short
before the cave's mysterious door.
They found no way to enter in,
nor would they to the hunt return.
They watched the road, with bitter sighs,
to see the army's dust arise.
A long time passed; the troops arrived,
seeking Bahram, from every side.
They sought the king; they saw the cave,
the stone within the serpent's head.
About the king those pages told
the story that had been concealed:
How, when the king pursued his prey,
he urged his horse into that way.
No one would credit what they heard,
and no one would believe their words.
All said, 'This is a dreadful dream
told by some childish fools. The king,
By God! an elephant, robust,
could not fit in this narrow place!'
(Not knowing that that elephant
had dreamed, and gone to Hindustan.)
Time held in check the mighty king;
how should one loose the bonds of Time?
They beat those slaves without remorse,
to learn the lost king's whereabouts.
At the sighs of those suffering youths,
dust issued from the cave like smoke.
'The king is in the cave,' there cried
a voice; 'go back; he's occupied.'
Those courtiers, men of action, went
into the cave, seeking the king.
Its bottom sealed, no one they spied;
there, many spiders, but no flies.
A hundred times they sought him there;
a hundred times washed it with tears.
But when they could not find the king,
snake-like, outside they formed a line,
And, eyes abrim with tears, sent to
King Bahram's mother the dire news.
His mother came, like one in pain
and grief, at losing such a son.
She sought the king (not like the rest:
she with her soul, they with their eyes);
She sought the rose, but found a thorn;
the more she sought, the less she found.
She poured out gold in mountainous heaps,
that they might dig there, group by group.
She dug a pit; no treasure found,
no Joseph in that pit. The ground
Which the old woman dug away
remains in fissures to this day.
The region's experts all concur;
call it 'the Cave of Bahram Gur'.
For forty days they dug that ground:
in grave-diggers the world abounds!
They dug until they reached the stream;
found not that treasure, even in dream.
He who's moved on to Heaven above,
to seek him in the ground is hard.
Body and bones lie in the ground;
what's heavenly's in Heaven found.
Each body 'neath the sphere's bestowed
a mother of earth, and one of blood.
The one with love will nourish him,
the other take him back again.
Though Bahram had two mothers, she
of earth behaved more lovingly:
She took him, and returned him not,
and gave no cure to those who sought.
So cruel was she, the mother of blood
with pain and grief destroyed herself.
When fever boiled within her brain,
she heard a hidden voice proclaim:
'O you who're heedless, like the beasts;
the birds' milk of the Unseen seek:
God placed a charge within your hands,
and took it back when the time came.
In giving up that charge, beware,
lest you, like fools, yourself impair.

Return, and tend to your affairs;
leave off this suffering.' When she heard
This message from the voice, she then
detached her love from King Bahram.
She left; that heart, once pledged to him,
gave to the interests of his son.
Crown and throne to his heirs she gave
(for all of Bahram's heirs survived).
O you who tell of Bahram Gur:
seek Bahram's grave, and say no more.
King Bahram Gur's no more among
mankind; nor can his grave be found.
You saw that once, by force, he named
the onager 'the branded one':
Think not of that first mighty brand,
but of the marked grave at the end.
He who'd a thousand asses slain
at last was trampled by the tomb.
Two doors has this abode of dung;
it takes one and another brings.
Three ells of earth (one ell in breadth)
are you; four jars in the dyer's shop.
All nourishment your stomach takes
is mixed with the four elements.
From head to foot you clothing wear
that's borrowed from these humours four.
Why fix your heart on borrowed hues,
since you must give them back? Those who
Are gone, their faces veiled by earth,
are from these scents and colours freed.
Until the dawn of Judgement Day,
the veil will not be torn away.
A fearsome path, a perilous night;
the guard asleep, the thief in flight:
The earth-born will by earth be filled;
the lowly bow to lower still.
Since you're above all these indeed,
why under every hand then bleed?
If you'd subdue the sky, then rise:
tread on the heights, the earth despise.
Proceed; do not look back at all,
lest you from sky to earth should fall.
The lofty sky's bright stars are jewels
in your sword-belt; they're all your tools.
Throughout their narrow sphere you roam;
these fancies' Teukros you alone.
Each one from you its image takes;
why then from each an omen seek?
That which they do, you are that light;
but from their worship be remote.
Save One Line, Point of origin,
those other letters are your own.
You are the angel who defends
God's praise; knows the Creator's signs.
Contemplate goodness; be not bad;
observe the beasts; be not a beast.
Both good and evil you can weigh;
aspire to Reason's sovereignty.
Or seek that door where bread abounds,
or like no other man become.
When the eye falls on the veil of light,
of Heaven and angels it loses sight.
Earth's the exemplar of the sky,
and man invites the angels nigh.
Turn from grief's market-place; how long
for earth, air, fire, and water long?
A room, four smokey chimneys: why
should it not straiten heart and eye?
A two-doored house, a robbers' street,
a traveller's four-banded bag.
Before from out this town you're cast,
load up your goods on ox and ass.
Travel by soul; the body's slow;
the horse is restive; therefore throw
Away your load. The dying man,
despairing, for the body yearns;
But he who knows his soul's true source,
can live without his body coarse.
Think not, who fabricate pretexts,
that nought but these two worlds exists.
Existence's length and breadth are great;
but all we know of is this cave.
Far from all this are beings who
nothing of light and darkness know.
Creation's multiple, 'tis known;
but its Creator is but One.
These seven four-sided tablets' plan
was drawn by but a single Pen.
Were they four hundred, not seven or four,
they serve One governance, no more.
The First Point, Final Circle, part
not from the One. Do not regard
Dualities, and how they join;
see but the single Source, the One.
Though every two has come from One,
the One remarns when two is gone.
Who comes into this transient sphere,
retracing his steps, he must return.
Traverse it gently; keen its skills:
it slowly takes, but quickly kills.
Though just, the humble slaying not,
none's by its reckoning forgot.
A hundred clever tricks won't gain
you more than what's to you ordained.
The heavens an ice-bound pool possess;
how long seek profit from this ice?

In air in which you'll frozen be,
strive to find life before you die.
He who, sphere-like, the broad world spans,
departs and leaves all in the end.
The world, no person, kills for nought;
the turning sphere will roll him up
And slay him. Thus, the goals you have
within this world, enjoy in life,
That when the sword and shaft arrive,
for what they take you will not grieve.
From this world, ere you pass, cut off
your soul, that it be freed from death.
Make your house humble, your food small;
thus from the world you'll save your soul.
Salvation in these two things lies:
in giving much, consuming slight.
Whoever makes his way to fame from
those two things will gain his name.
No greedy man high rank obtains;
no niggard great position gains.
The bailiff wields his shaming scourge
gainst villagers who give short curds.
He's favoured who, in such a place,
holds goodness better than high price.
This world with high and low is full;
for none high status in this world.
How can you fix your heart upon
that deed which carries your own doom?
Each building high beneath the sphere:
cast dust on it, for 'tis but earth.
Escape its snare; do not be slow;
your pulpit, scaffold; be not bold.
You seek for life upon that cross;
but one Messiah is enough.
If a mortal reached the highest sphere,
his clay would draw him back to earth.
One raises to the skies his crown;
takes taxes from the Seven Climes:
See how one night he dies, head bowed
in pain. The earth is not without
Those fearsome spears that nothing reck;
its treasury no dragon lacks.
Where is the date without a thorn;
without a snake, where the snake-stone?
Yea, all that's good and bad in time
is poisoned honey, honeyed bane.
Who is it not that honey drinks,
that after does not feel the sting?
Honey and sting, before and aft,
of the same bee is tail and breath.
Within the veil of dark and light,
where Jesus' love, where donkey-bead?
Who over the earth his throne's not raised
that earth's not tightly grasped at last?
O Lord, grant that which bringeth ease,
and will not, last, repentence cause.
Be generous to Nizami; make
safe refuge for him near Your gate.
You gave him good repute at first;
give a good outcome at the last.
53.
Prayer for the Ruler's Good Fortune; Conclusion.
Since, by its assay and design,
this coin of Ganja's treasure shines
Like Rumi gold, the king's great name
I've bound to it, to gain me fame.
With Chinese robe and Grecian crown,
paid tribute by both Chin and Rum,
By the Law's root and branch he's gained
Bakhtishut 's judgement, Jesus' fame.
The heavens at his service stand;
his grandeur all the world maintains.
In Heaven's order, the reward
of service is two disks of bread.
His chivalry, which musk exhales,
like dry earth scatters lustrous pearls:
From earth to ether, others foam
and dregs; his essence pure alone.
In his largesse, Egyptian gold
outnumbers Mecca's sands. His sword
Treats hardest rock as does hot fire
dry poplar chips. His arrow's barb,
Its point hair-splitting, cleaves the mount
in twain. From the resplendant dawn
His shining mail wrests light's bright lance;
his lance from the moon's mail its rings.
The six directions' mail his robe;
the seven spheres by his lasso caught.
O you in whom Nizami puts
his hope; who shapes this age's fate:
You're viewed as Heaven by both the earth
and Heaven itself, so great your worth.
Like sky in water, near and far;
like sun in mirror, quick and slow.
Maintainer of the world; the one
not yet arrived, by you cast down.
Like angels, you all men excel;
you the high sphere above them all.
'Tis fit that I address this poem
to you; for thus will it gain fame.
Since rubies deck its crown, I have
addressed it to you, fearing thieves.
And if it please your hearing, like
your throne, it too will be raised high.
When men pour honey over thorns,
as 'Persian manna' it 'is known.

From my mind's garden I have brought
to you a fruit as rich and sweet
As honeyed milk. Its seeds of figs
do taste; its centre almond-pith.
For lesser men its outside's fine;
for those who see, the pith's within,
It has a casket full of pearls,
locked tight; the key thereto its words.
The pearl glides easily on that string
whose key will loosen knots. All things
Are on its string; good, bad; and all
allusion, wisdom, and symbol.
Each story is a treasure-house,
and no mere fable. Each one whose
Garment was shorter than its form,
I've with my verses made it long;
While that which was too long, with art
I've shortened to a perfect fit.
A tale both fine and rare, my gift,
with supple bones and sweetest pith.
That you may see its beauty clear,
with every art I've decked it fair.
My grace comes easy, costs me slight;
it decks with precious gems each point:
Some untouched lovelies, virgins all,
like rose-buds 'neath a silken veil;
One line of gold, and one of pearl,
empty of sham, of meaning full;
That men may know, from lofty thought,
I what I wish bring forth from nought.
All that which, in these Seven Domes
of mystery, I have adorned
With length and width, 'twas that the eyes,
from full adornment, might find ease.
All that you see, in this broad space,
that I've thrown wide to ears and eyes,
Are meaning's beauties, narrow-eyed,
their faces veiled from narrow sight;
Each bride a treasury shut fast,
the golden key beneath her locks.
He will find gold who opes this mine;
who finds the door fair pearls will gain.
I, who paint words with sugared pen,
strew fresh dates from this shrine's high palm.
From fields of art my reed-pen brings
to Mercury fresh ears of corn.
These he has made his own; no matter
that 'story-tellers love not each other'
Since, from the fort of my content,
this treasure to the king I've sent,
In paying my reward of gold
his brazen fort in debt I hold.
This debt stems not from hunger; brass
the fort which silver dirhams lacks.
Its stony peak's sharp iron blade
has scattered for a hundred leagues
Both rubies, to the hands of friends,
and, 'neath his foes' feet, diamonds.
No fort, but Katba: holy shrine,
the pilgrims' blessed Jerusalem.
The golden nail, the world's strong pole;
Ruin-Diz for its power called.
And he who would that fort assail,
his fear finds armour no avail.
The Mount of Mercy is its gate;
Bu Qubays crowns it with its belt.
May ever live this circle's line
by that high sun, its central point.
From forts besieged the people send
their messages on pigeons bound,
So that the joyous bird may bear
them to those who their cries will hear.
So I, in my own land confined,
with all ways shut, before, behind,
Have tied a message to a bird;
if it comes to the king, I'm freed.
O you to whom the sky bows low;
who pardons sins; wears Cathay robes:
Since that your fortune aided me,
my nature's magic work now see.
In the year five hundred and ninety-three,
like poets famed, this book achieved
Have I, on fourteenth Ramazan,
four hours past the break of dawn.
And may it augur well for you,
as long as you're enthroned. May you
Drink from its verses the Water of Life;
through it, like Khizr, ever live.
Lord, may you ever live in joy
and happiness; long life enjoy:
Forgive me should I cause offence,
and give me leave to make this point:
Although your banquets are unmatched,
yet this is an eternal feast.
Men reckon gems and treasures wealth:
this is true ease, the rest all trial.
That, should it last five hundred years,
may you live long! will not endure;
This treasure, destined for your court,
will ever be your firm support.
These wisdom-nourished verses now
with prayer I will conclude. May you,
Wherever you be, be fortunate;
may the sky at your stirrup wait;
And, as your fortune waxes,
may your end be true felicity.